

DRAYSBAY 09 Season Preview

CHANGE GONNA COME BY MARC NORMANDIN	6
INTRODUCTION BY R.J. ANDERSON	8
DUMPING THE CLICHÉS BY R.J. ANDERSON.....	9
THE MAGNIFICENT 10 BY TOMMY RANCEL.....	14
COMMUNITY PROJECTIONS.....	19
MAJOR LEAGUE TYPES.....	21
WILLY AYBAR UTL	21
GRANT BALFOUR RHP	21
JASON BARTLETT SS.....	21
CHAD BRADFORD RHP	22
PAT BURRELL DH/OF.....	22
RANDY CHOATE LHP	22
LANCE CORMIER RHP.....	23
CARL CRAWFORD LF.....	23
MATT GARZA RHP	24
GABE GROSS OF	24
JASON HAMMEL RHP	24
J.P. HOWELL LHP	25
AKINORI IWAMURA 2B.....	25
JOHN JASO C/DH	26
ELLIOT JOHNSON UTL	26
MATT JOYCE OF.....	26
GABE KAPLER OF.....	27
SCOTT KAZMIR LHP.....	27
EVAN LONGORIA 3B.....	28
DIONER NAVARRO C.....	28
JOE NELSON RHP	28
JEFF NIEMANN RHP	29
CARLOS PENA 1B	29
TROY PERCIVAL RHP	30
FERNANDO PEREZ OF	30
DAVID PRICE LHP	30
SHAWN RIGGANS C	31
DEREK RODRIGUEZ RHP.....	31
JUSTIN RUGGIANO OF	32
JAMES SHIELDS RHP	32
BRIAN SHOUSE LHP.....	32
ANDREW SONNANSTINE RHP	33
MITCH TALBOT RHP.....	33
DALE THAYER RHP	33
B.J. UPTON CF.....	33
DAN WHEELER RHP	34
BEN ZOBRIST UTL.....	34
WINSTON ABREU RHP	35
JASON CHILDERS RHP.....	35
DEWON DAY RHP.....	35
MORGAN ENSBERG CN	35

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

JASON ISRINGHAUSEN RP	35
ADAM KENNEDY MI.....	35
RAY OLMEDO INF.....	35
ON PROSPECTING BY KILEY MCDANIEL.....	36
PROSPECTS, ECT.....	41
KYLE AYERS RHP	41
NICK BARNESE RHP	41
TIM BECKHAM SS	41
REID BRIGNAC SS.....	42
WADE DAVIS RHP	42
REID FRONK COF.....	43
MATT GORGEN RHP.....	43
JAMES HOUSER JR. LHP	43
JEREMY HELLICKSON RHP	43
RHYNE HUGHES 1B.....	44
JACOB JEFFERIES C	44
DESMOND JENNINGS OF	45
D.J. JONES OF	45
KYEONG KANG OF	45
JAKE MCGEE LHP	45
TY MORRISON OF.....	46
MATT MOORE LHP	46
CHRIS NOWAK 1B/3B.....	46
RYAN REID RHP	46
MICHAEL SHERIDAN 1B.....	47
STEPHEN VOGT OF/C	47
MAYOBANEX ACOSTA	47
OMAR BENCOMO	47
JACINTO CIPRIOTA	47
JULIO CEDENO	47
HECTOR GUEVARA.....	48
CESAR GUILLEN.....	48
ISAIAS VELASQUEZ.....	48
NELSON LIRIANO	48
DEIVIS MAVARES	48
OMAR NARVAEZ	48
GERARDO OLIVARES.....	48
ENNY ROMERO.....	48
ALBERT SUAREZ	48
ALEJANDRO TORRES.....	48
RAYS FANTASY PREVIEW BY JASON COLLETTE	49
FASTBALL CRAVING AND BENDY THING WAVING BY R.J. ANDERSON	54
CRAWFORD & CLEMENTE BY TOMMY RANCEL.....	59
THE ALL-TIME RAYS OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TEAMS BY TOMMY RANCEL.....	62
THE BEST OF SHORT TIDBITS BY R.J. ANDERSON.....	66
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	72
STATISTICAL GLOSSARY	73
INDEX.....	78

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Written by Tommy Rancel R.J. Anderson, Erik Hahmann, and Ryan Glass

Change Gonna Come by Marc Normandin

You might be asking yourself why it is that a Red Sox fan is writing the foreword for a Rays' preview guide. As a writer for a website that covers all thirty teams, you are eventually accused of hating every team and loving no one, but for the most part people are aware that I am, in fact, a Red Sox fan. Here's the catch though: I'm a fan of baseball, first and foremost, and the 2008 Rays are a wonderful baseball story. Second, as a Red Sox fan, I have my eye on the Rays the 16 games per week that they play against each other over the course of the season.

I was actively rooting for the Rays to win the division up until the point where it was actually happening, when the Red Sox fan in me awoke and realized what I had been doing while he was away during his restful summer slumber. From that point on, the baseball fan in me took a back seat, and the Bostonian in me was confident that the Sox would take care of business and end up in the World Series. Things (happily for all of you reading this) did not work out that way though, and the Rays made it to their first World Series in franchise history, where they would sadly lose to the booing Santa-haters up in Philly.

I have few regrets about the Sox losing to the Rays; after all, as someone who was used to the (Devil) Rays being a punching bag and joke for the entirety of their existence prior to 2008, I could appreciate what was happening. New ownership and a new front office had taken the talent that was already in place, made the moves that needed to be made, and assembled the old and new into a roster that was capable of beating the rest of the American League. This is an impressive feat, especially in the powerhouse American League East where the Blue Jays have failed to take that last step the entire decade.

I spent most of my spring telling people about how the Rays had improved: their 2007 defense was one of the worst in the history of the modern game, if not the worst, and the club had spent the off-season improving that aspect of the team. This would in turn make the pitching staff better (ask the departed Edwin Jackson how much he misses the Rays' 2008 defense come June this year). The addition of Evan Longoria, whenever he arrived, would make the offense better. The lineup and rotation were both overflowing with young talent just waiting to break out, and generally speaking, your everyday, average fan did not see this. *Especially* not the pompous drunks in the Fenway bleachers.

Even though not everything worked out as planned—Carl Crawford played hurt for most of the year, limiting his productivity at the plate, and B.J. Upton's shoulder did not allow him to hit for power until he magically healed come playoff time—the Rays won the division and the American League pennant, and set their franchise record for wins in a year sometime during the first few weeks of the season. This was all pretty impressive when you consider this was the first major rebuilding year on the schedule.

Some Red Sox fans still do not get it. "The Rays were lucky!" they say. "You just wait until David Ortiz is healthy!" you hear. "Wait until Jason Varitek bounces back!" Okay,

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

nobody says that last one. Here's the thing though: the Rays are *not* going away. You think last year was bad? Wait until Crawford and Upton are healthy for a full season, and Longoria is there all year. Now they have Pat Burrell in their lineup, and the one thing he cannot do is field, so they fixed their on-going DH situation with him, and *Jesus Christ* did you see David Price's fastball in the playoffs? That freak is in the rotation now! For 35 starts a year!

My quiet admiration for the Rays has shifted into full-on panic mode, and while I wish you luck, I do not wish it nearly as much as last year. Here in this preview you will read about all of the reasons why you should be excited for your upcoming season, while I will sit here nervously biting my nails as I turn the digital pages, hoping that half of your young players decide that they would rather play Xbox, shoot hoops, or paint or *anything* besides try to win the division my beloved Sox reside in.



*Marc Normandin is the author of BP Fantasy Beat and Player Profile series at [Baseball Prospectus](#), as well as the Gaming Editor for [Blast Magazine](#). His work also regularly appears at *Sports Illustrated*, and he has contributed to the last three editions of the *Baseball Prospectus* annual.*

Introduction by R.J. Anderson

One of the most common questions I've received since announcing the guide was about the cover. Why Carlos Pena? Who took the picture? It must suck for you to not have B.J., right? And so on. To answer those:

1. You'll see below.
2. Richard Schaefer, who along with Dennis Adair provided the photography.
3. Not really, considering I picked the photo and player.

I don't think there's a baseball fan in the world that hates Carlos Pena. He hits homeruns, smiles, and seemingly bleeds sunshine. Pena is everything that's right with baseball, and for the first time, I'm ready to admit he's the best first baseman in Rays history. Big whoop, I know, but remember, I'm the guy who still has his Fred McGriff jersey hanging in the closet – just in case Cooperstown comes calling and inevitably breaks my heart by having his plaque wear a Braves insignia. Now, you know better than to expect DRaysBay to make a statement like that without backing it with numbers, so...

McGriff (1998-2001) combined wRAA: ~90 runs.

Pena (2007-2008) combined wRAA: ~74 runs.

Since that's playing time adjusted and they both play the same position, the only adjustment we need is defensive. McGriff has a poor defensive reputation, but we'll call $-5 < x < 0$ runs, -2.5 runs for this exercise, even if that seems a bit optimistic. Pena has been a ~2 run defender each of his seasons with the Rays. Add those together and you get 80 and 78 runs. But wait, if you recall, in 2001 McGriff was dealt to Chicago, meaning not all of his 2001 runs should be credited to his Rays career. Instead, after we adjust, we see that McGriff earned 19 of those 30 runs with the Rays. Knocking another 11 runs off his contribution and settling the totals at 69 runs McGriff, 78 runs Pena.

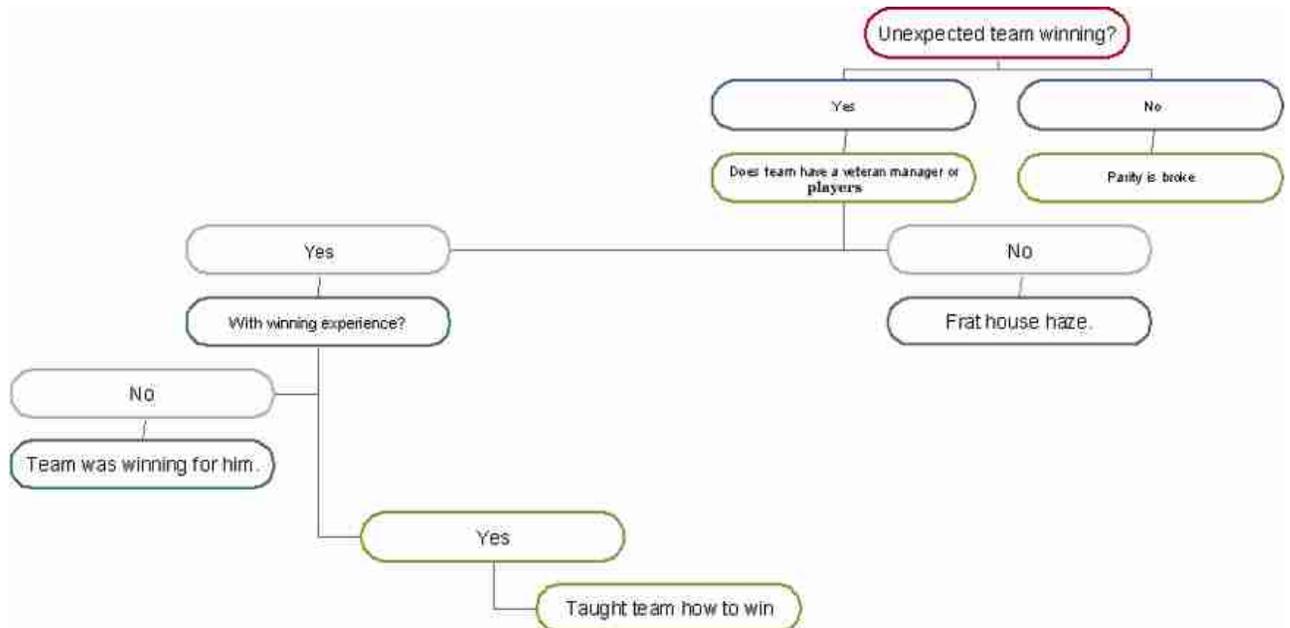
As you also may have noticed, we're comparing 3.5 seasons of McGriff to 2 of Pena. Yes, Pena's 2007 was a bit inflated, but he's still averaging 39 runs per season compared to McGriff's ~17. That means Pena would have to be worth about 15 runs each of the next two seasons to equal McGriff. Perhaps it's just me, but I don't really see Pena dropping off that quickly.

Anyhow, that's just an aside. We have a ton of good things to get to in this guide, from the 40-man roster player comments to the 20 prospects we've chosen to cover. We have a scouting manifesto and fantasy baseball preview. We also have an in-depth look at Carl Crawford and Roberto Clemente, plus a Scott Kazmir 2008 review that is deeper than anything else we've written on the topic. Oh, and finally we have the all-time Rays offensive and defensive teams and a few extra things thrown in here and there.

You guys asked for it, and since we're slaves to approval, we're here to give it to you, hopefully we did you proud.

Dumping the Clichés by R.J. Anderson

Oh Cinderella stories, how you give sports writers the worries. A team simply being built well does not make for good copy, just ask Boston sportswriters, instead there has to be an illusion of mythology or an injection of drama to spice things up. Sometime during the 2008 season I acquired the following flowchart distributed throughout most media sectors. I won't out my source, but the chart is a hand-me-down from years before.



I'm not even sure what "frat house haze" has to do with baseball, but regardless, by now you've heard all of the clichés associated with the Rays, right? And you're probably tired of telling people that the bullpen wasn't as good as they thought, that Jason Bartlett was not the best defensive player on the team, and that the Rays only win because of their first round picks. Well, if not, let's break down the five worst given reasons for the Rays success:

5. Joe Maddon taught the team to win.

Okay, but why did the team only start winning in year three of Maddon's tenure? Oh, it takes three years to "change the culture"? Well, okay, but here's the problem: a lot of the players on the 2008 team were either new or relatively new to the organization. The 2006 opening day lineup consisted of:

C Toby Hall
1B Travis Lee
2B Jorge Cantu
3B Aubrey Huff
SS Julio Lugo

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

LF Carl Crawford

CF Joey Gathright

RF Damon Hollins

DH Jonny Gomes

Bolded are the names that remained on the team in 2008.

Here's 2007's opening day lineup:

C Dioner Navarro

1B Ty Wigginton

2B B.J. Upton

3B Akinori Iwamura

SS Ben Zobrist

LF Carl Crawford

CF Elijah Dukes

RF Delmon Young

DH Rocco Baldelli

Again, bolded are the remaining names.

What about the rotations you say?

2006:

Scott Kazmir

Seth McClung

Mark Hendrickson

Casey Fossum

Doug Waechter

2007:

Scott Kazmir

Jae Seo

James Shields

Casey Fossum

Edwin Jackson

Huh. Now on to the bullpens:

2006:

Jason Childers

Ruddy Lugo

Shawn Camp

Jesus Colome

Brian Meadows

Travis Harper

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Dan Miceli

2007:

Shawn Camp

Brian Stokes

Ruddy Lugo

Juan Salas

Al Reyes

Gary Glover

Jae Kuk Ryu

The benches:

2006:

Josh Paul

Ty Wigginton

Nick Green

Russell Branyan

2007:

Brendan Harris

Carlos Pena

Josh Paul

Jonny Gomes

Of those 50 roster spots, 16 were on the Rays 2008 opening day roster. About 30%. Therefore, either Joe Maddon's 2008 players were a bit sharper (or more talented) or Maddon suddenly put more effort into his job.

4. The Rays veterans had post-season experience.

Well, they had rings, but in terms of playing?

Eric Hinske 1 AB

Troy Percival 9.2 IP

Cliff Floyd 19 AB

Trever Miller 1.1 IP

Dan Wheeler 18 IP

Rings:

Hinske 1

Percival 1

Floyd 1



DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

3. The Rays were the team in the World Series relying on 1st round players.

Good drafting is a sin! The top players by [FanGraphs](#) Win Values (players listed had at least 1 win):

Longoria (1st round)
Upton (1st round)
Pena (free agent)
Crawford (2nd round)
Navarro (trade)
Iwamura (free agent)
Hinske (free agent)
Gross (trade)
Bartlett (trade)
Aybar (trade)
Zobrist (trade)
Shields (later than 5th round)
Sonnanstine (later than 5th round)
Garza (trade)
Balfour (trade)
Kazmir (trade)
Howell (trade)
Jackson (trade)

How about the Phillies?

Utley (1st round)
Rollins (2nd round)
Werth (free agent)
Victorino (rule 5)
Howard (5th round)
Burrell (1st round)
Coste (free agent)
Feliz (free agent)
Dobbs (waivers)
Hamels (1st round)
Moyer (trade)
Lidge (trade)
Myers (1st round)
Madson (later than 5th round)
Durbin (free agent)



How about the actual breakdown of wins and how the teams acquired them? (Late draft means fifth round or later)

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Rays

Acquired	Wins
1st Round	9.4
2nd Round	3
F. Agent	8.2
Trade	19.3
Late Draft	7.8

Phillies

Acquired	Wins
1st Round	17.2
2nd Round	5.1
F. Agent	8.9
Trade	4.8
Late Draft	4.4
Waivers	1
Rule 5	3.8

Even if you throw Matt Garza and Jason Bartlett into the Rays 1st round wins total, the totals still favor the Phillies.

2. Chuck LaMar is largely responsible for the Rays success.

See above, LaMar had a hand in drafting a few of those players, and acquiring the players that Andrew Friedman dealt. To be fair, LaMar also held the job long enough to put together that core of players and failed to set the team back by trading Scott Kazmir, B.J. Upton, or Carl Crawford.

1. Nobody saw the Rays coming.

Actually, multiple projection systems, such as PECOTA and CHONE uh...you know what? Don't be silly, computers don't know anything about baseball.



The Magnificent 10 by Tommy Rancel

There were many well pitched games for the Rays in 2008. However, which games were really the best games? Thanks to game score we can easily see which games stood up to the statistical bar of “best games.” I took the liberty of compiling a top 10 list of the best starts by Rays pitchers according to game score. Here is the list and enjoy the memories.

1 James Shields 5/9/08 vs. Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	1	0	0	0	8	0	92	61

Game Score 93

It’s hard to do much better than James Shields did on May 9th. In fact the only game in the American League that scored a higher game score was Jon Lester’s no hitter. Shields would face just one batter over the minimum and the only thing that stood between him and perfection was a single up the middle by Brandon Wood in the third inning. There is some debate on whether this game or the late Joe Kennedy’s one hitter in 2003 was the best pitched game in Rays history, but because Kennedy issued a walk, I’ll go ahead and give Shields the honor of the best pitched game in Rays history.

2 Matt Garza 6/26/08 vs. Florida Marlins

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	1	1	1	1	10	1	108	76

Game Score 90

Matt Garza was so close, so, so, so close to the first no hitter in Rays history, but one pitch got away from him. After losing his perfect game bid in the fourth inning on a walk to Jeremy Hermida, Garza was cruising in the seventh inning until a curveball didn’t quite curve enough. Hanley Ramirez turned on the curveball and deposited into the stands in left-center field ending Garza’s no hit bid. Garza, however, regained his composure and retired the next nine batters in order including five of them on strikeouts. It would be Garza’s first career one hitter, but not his only 90 game score on the season. In fact Garza was the only pitcher to appear in the top five game scores of his league twice.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

3 Matt Garza 8/15/08 vs. Texas Rangers

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	2	0	0	2	6	0	119	78

Game Score 90

While this game was not quite as efficient as his one hitter against the Marlins, Matt Garza delivered another 90 game score performance in this one. On a warm August night in Arlington, Texas, Garza pitched his second complete game shutout in less than a month. He allowed just four base runners (two hits and two walks) and dominated the Rangers with 86 fastballs that averaged a speed of 94 miles per hour. Garza seemed to get strong as the night went on and in the last at bat to Josh Hamilton he unleashed two fastballs that were around 95.5 miles per hour. Just another glimpse of how good he can be when he's "on."

4 James Shields 4/27/08 vs. Boston Red Sox.

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	2	0	0	1	7	0	99	66

Game Score 89

While Shields didn't have his highest game score on this night, many would argue that this was his best start because of his opponent, The Boston Red Sox. Shields would dominate a talented Red Sox lineup on this night completing a two hit shutout in fewer than 100 pitches. His only blemishes are: a first inning single to Dustin Pedroia that was wiped out by a 4-6-3 double play, a fifth inning walk to Manny Ramirez and a sixth inning single to Julio Lugo. It was Shields's finest start to date, but it would be out done just two starts later.

5 Andy Sonnanstine 4/19/08 vs. Chicago White Sox

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	3	0	0	1	4	0	106	77

Game Score 84

The most underrated pitcher on the Rays staff is easily Andy Sonnanstine. Sure in terms of ERA, he is toward the back of the Rays rotation, but in terms of advanced metrics like tRA and FIP, he was the Rays best starter not named James Shields. As for an individual game, April 19th was the best we've ever seen from Sonnanstine. In a game I was lucky enough to attend live, Sonny and Mark Buerhle performed an old fashion pitchers duel like somebody hit the fast forward button. If you got up for a beer or a bathroom break,

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

you missed about three innings. The entire game took just two hours and two minutes and at the end Sonnanstine had produced a masterful three hit shutout. He faced just two batters over the minimum and the three hits against him were all singles. He had some excellent starts in September vs. the Red Sox, but this was easily his best work to date.

6 Matt Garza 7/29/08 vs. Toronto Blue Jays

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
9	5	0	0	1	5	0	106	74

Game Score 81

Garza's name pops up again on this list with this time coming against division foe, Toronto Blue Jays. Facing Jays Ace, Roy Halladay, Garza went pitch for pitch with Halladay and ended up with his first career complete game shutout. It would be the second time in 10 days that Garza out dueled the former Cy Young award winner. Garza would give up just four singles before giving up a double to Adam Lind in the eight inning. He induced a ground ball to end the inning and the threat in the next at bat. Garza would throw 70% of his 106 pitches for strikes including five strike outs.



7 Matt Garza 7/19/08 vs. Toronto Blue Jays

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
7.2	2	0	0	0	6	0	107	70

Game Score 81

Very similar to the 7/29 game, Garza once again faced the rival Blue Jays in a match up of pitching studs. Again facing Roy Halladay, Garza would be just as good as his shutout matching the game score of 81. After allowing just two hits in over seven innings of work Garza was lifted for J.P. Howell in the eight inning. He exited with 107 pitches (70 for strikes) which was good for six strikeouts and no walks. A few long AB's cut Garza's night short, but he still left the game with a 6-0 lead. After sabotage attempts by Trever Miller and Al Reyes, Dan Wheeler retired the final two batters to preserve the win for Garza.

8 Edwin Jackson 4/10/08 vs. Seattle Mariners

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
8	2	0	0	4	6	0	99	61

Game Score 80

In a game I like to call the “oh my god, he’s turned the corner” game, Jackson dazzled a home crowd to eight innings of two hit baseball. This sent mass hysteria through out the Rays fan base that Jackson had turned some magical corner and was living up to his potential. He came back down to Earth quickly in his next two starts and all was back to normal. However, on this night he was pretty damn good. With a fastball that was around 94 and a slider that was going for a strike about 80% of the time, this was the best we saw from Jackson since his 2007 shutout against Texas. He surrendered just two singles, but in true E-Jax fashion he handed out four walks and a wild pitch. It would be the last really good game for Jackson in a Rays uniform, but for one night he even had the best of us fooled.



9 Scott Kazmir 7/21/08 vs. Oakland Athletics

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
7	2	0	0	4	9	0	102	68

Game Score 78

It was a strange season for Scott Kazmir to say the least. An elbow injury forced him to miss the first six weeks of the season and when he returned to the rotation he ripped off six of the best starts we’ve ever seen from him. In a personal six game win streak, Kaz pitched 41 innings, allowing just 4 ER(0.88 ERA) while striking out 39 and holding his opponents to a .449 OPS. Simply amazing. Surprisingly, his best start didn’t come during this streak, but actually in mid-July against the Oakland A’s. Kaz was dealing on this night featuring, almost exclusively, a fastball that was around 93. He K’d nine batters in

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

seven innings and gave up just two hits. But as was the case in many of Kazmir's starts, his pitch count got the best of him. The Rays called in Grant Balfour and JP Howell to preserve the shutout. Sadly, this would be the last time we would see Kazmir pitch seven innings in a ball game in 2008. He would go six innings or less in each of his 12 remaining starts. We are all hoping for a healthy 2009 for him and a lot more starts like this one.

10 James Shields 9/13/08 vs. New York Yankees

IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	Pitches	Strikes
8	5	0	0	0	6	0	106	70

Game Score 78

Shields took a lot of criticism for the nickname "Big Game James." First, he didn't give himself the nickname and second, as far as the Rays are concerned, Shields has pitched in some of the biggest games in team history. This game was the first of a double header in mid-September in Yankee Stadium. The Red Sox were two games behind the Rays when the day started with just 18 games to go. To say the stage wasn't "big" is an understatement. Shields came through with a dominating eight inning performance allowing no runs and no walks. He scattered five hits and struck out six batters. He turned a 7-0 game to his bullpen after 106 pitches with 66% of those going for strikes. Regardless of if he "earned" his moniker, it was a big win in a big spot.



Community Projections

Hitter	Pos	PA	wOBA
Navarro	CA	510	.326
Riggans	CA	124	.309
Jaso	CA	37	.327
Pena	1B	682	.406
Aybar	1B	94	.349
Burrell	1B	4	.385
Iwamura	2B	678	.340
Aybar	2B	80	.349
Zobrist	2B	40	.331
Bartlett	SS	527	.318
Zobrist	SS	62	.331
Brignac	SS	39	.310
Aybar	SS	23	.349
Longoria	3B	638	.388
Aybar	3B	66	.349
Zobrist	3B	5	.331
Crawford	LF	595	.347
Kapler	LF	60	.332
Zobrist	LF	56	.330
Burrell	LF	33	.331
Upton	CF	588	.391
Kapler	CF	73	.332
Perez	CF	65	.330
Gross	RF	220	.361
Joyce	RF	217	.334
Kapler	RF	155	.332
Zobrist	RF	48	.331
Perez	RF	48	.330
Burrell	DH	669	.385
Aybar	DH	61	.349
Crawford	DH	19	.346
Other	DH	11	.340
Total		6526.5	.358

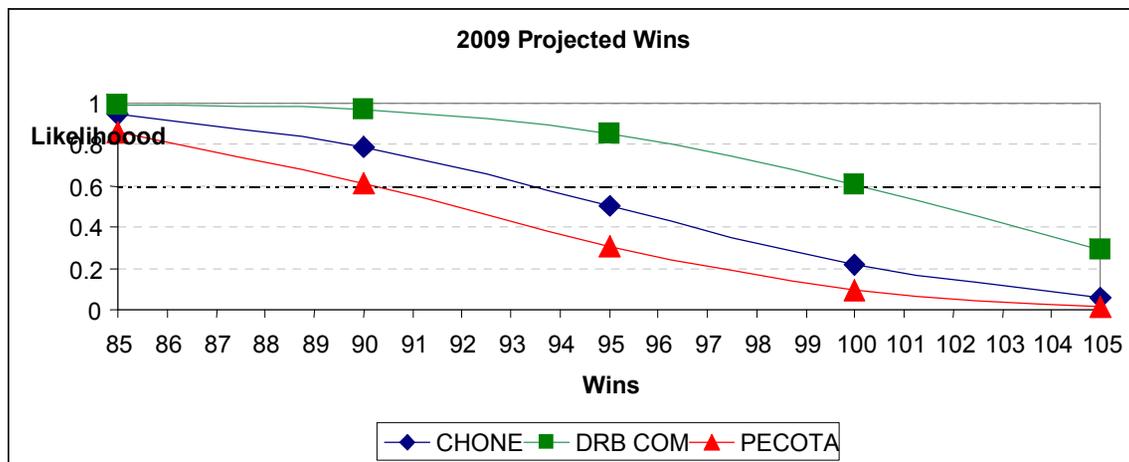
Pitcher	S/R	IP	ERA	LEV
Shields	S	205	3.70	1.0
Kazmir	S	170	3.67	1.0
Garza	S	180	3.87	1.0
Sonnanstine	S	190	3.96	1.0
Price	S	145	4.02	1.0
Niemann	S	35	4.50	1.0
Talbot	S	15	5.00	1.0

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Balfour	R	60	3.00	1.8
Howell	R	70	3.43	1.7
Percival	R	35	4.90	1.3
Wheeler	R	55	3.76	1.2
Nelson	R	60	3.73	1.0
Bradford	R	50	3.82	0.9
Salas	R	30	3.89	0.8
Niemann	R	25	3.75	0.7
Cormier	R	25	4.44	0.6
Shouse	R	40	3.50	0.8
Talbot	R	25	4.50	0.5
Others	R	30	4.50	0.4

Predicted Wins: 106.6

That's a *wee* bit high, so we've taken it upon ourselves to lower that by 5% and then ran the numbers (via binomial distribution) against the initial CHONE and PECOTA projections. The community is still a bit more optimistic than either of the computers,



We're fans of being conservative when it comes to these projections, but not one of us would rather see PECOTA/CHONE be correct in this case.

Major League Types

Willy Aybar UTL

David Cameron's new obsession is on the verge of signing a 2-year extension worth about a million per year. Willy is not only the best bench player in baseball, but also one of the best values in baseball. A true utility infielder that is good at first, average at second and third, and passable at short, Aybar also brings the wood to the ballpark. Last year his wOBA was .321 (about 2 runs below average) which is decent for a do-everything infielder, but his BABIP was an unlucky .267. Aybar's career BABIP is .298 and his xBABIP was .054 points higher, signaling that Aybar was significantly unlucky. If you control his statistics for luck by using his xBABIP, then his wOBA jumps all the way up to .360. This would solidify his role as best backup in baseball as the Aybar deal continues to look like one of the better moves on Friedman's résumé.

Grant Balfour RHP

In many ways, Grant Balfour personified the Rays organization in 2008. Without much major league success in the past, Balfour emerged on the scene as one of the best relievers in all of baseball. Placed on waivers at the end of spring, Balfour was passed on by the 29 other teams and contemplated free agency before agreeing to a split contract with the Rays. Balfour was dominating Triple-A Durham when closer Troy Percival fell to an injury, prompting a promotion and continued dominance. A sparkling 2.22 FIP and an impressive 12.65 K /9 that helped result in 2.2 wins above replacement spearheaded Balfour's amazing season. That led all Rays relievers and was more than Joe Nathan, Joakim Soria and Carlos Marmol. The question now is can he keep it up? The odds say no, but he doesn't need to repeat his 2008 performance to be the Rays bullpen ace again. Balfour's low BABIP of .233 compared to his career average of .302 points to obvious regression. Much of Balfour's success relies on his plus, *plus* fastball that he threw over 91% of the time in 2008 and will probably repeat in 2009. If Balfour is a 3.00 FIP reliever who can fan almost 100 batters in 70 innings, the Rays won't mind the regression too much.

Jason Bartlett SS

You usually do not see shortstops who hit .286 with a home run and 37 runs batted in getting many – if any -- votes for the league's Most Valuable Player award, but that's what happened to Jason Bartlett in 2008. The main reason the Rays acquired Bartlett from the Twins in the Delmon Young/Matt Garza trade was for his superb defense at shortstop. Bartlett had previously posted UZR's of 12.2, 13.2 and 10.4 his three previous seasons, yet struggled to post a 1.5 in 2008. The reasons for the giant drop off are unknown, but attribute some of it to a knee injury that potentially limited Bartlett's range

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

to his left. As his defense slipped, so too did his offense. Barlett posted the lowest walk rate and highest strikeout rate of his career, and proved to be useless against right-handed pitching, posting a .597 OPS. However, against southpaws Bartlett acted like Chase Utley, putting up a .919 OPS in 132 at-bats. Bartlett also improved greatly after the All-Star break with an .838 OPS as opposed to the .592 he threw up (pun unintended) prior to the break. So which Jason Bartlett will we see in 2009? Your answer lies somewhere in the middle. Expect an OPS in the .700-.710 range and unless he suddenly turned into Derek Jeter over night the UZR should climb back into the 10 range.

Chad Bradford RHP

There's really not much to say about Chad Bradford. He's an extreme ground ball pitcher and a reliable middle reliever that's going to get you 50-70IP every season with a FIP hovering around the 3.50 range. What you see is what you get, except in 2009 you'll see Bradford with a sling around his right arm for a couple months. Bradford underwent arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow to remove some "loose bodies" and will be sidelined 3-4 months. With the recent addition of Lance Cormier, who has a career GB% of over 50, and the fact that Bradford doesn't have the most team friendly contract in the world (\$3.5 million), Bradford might not be long for this team. There's no real way to tell how Bradford's 2009 season will shape up. Cormier and the bullpen could perform well in which case Bradford becomes a valuable trading chip, or they could falter and Bradford could come in to stabilize the situation. Either way the Rays are in a good situation.

Pat Burrell DH/OF

The Rays signing of Burrell is almost brilliant for a multitude of reasons. While Burrell does not succeed at having a good batting average, his homerun, runs batted in, and – in this post-Moneyball world – walk rates will have the casual fan only slightly murmuring about those darn strikeouts. Of course, Burrell is probably not as good as the casual fan will credit him as, but he's still pretty good. Remember, players are essentially having their replacement level adjustment wiped out when they DH most of the time, that means it's all about how well (or poor) they can hit. For Burrell to be worth 2-2.5 wins – or a league average to slightly above average player overall – he'll have to be 20-30 runs above average offensively. Over the last three years, Burrell has been worth an average of 21 offensive runs, impressive, and certainly worth 16 million over two years. Burrell's off-the-field antics can be summed up as: Britney Spears, FedEx, and towels. Although we'll pass on fill in the blanks, but he's everything we've ever wanted from Jonny Gomes.

Randy Choate LHP

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Choate throws from a lowered angle that gives him an advantage over left-handed batters, so is there any doubt that Choate should only face left-handed batters? Choate relies on a fastball that sits in the mid-to-high 80s and a slider that sits only a few ticks below that. Choate generates a good number of groundballs, but like another former Milwaukee Brewers reliever, has issues when it comes to walks. Don't be surprised if Choate makes his way onto the team during the season. He's a nice cheap LOOGY option, just as they should be.

Lance Cormier RHP

In 2008, Cormier had a career year working out of the O's pen after several years of fail as a starting pitcher. Working as a reliever exclusive seemed to work well for Cormier as he saw his RHOPS against dropped over .100 points to .772 and his LHOPS dropped almost .200 down to a lefty-specialist-like .667. For his career, he is over 51% groundball, but in 2008 that number increased to 56.8%. So what was different from 2008 than the seasons past? Pitch selection. Cormier has three main pitches: A fastball around 90, a cutter around 88 and a curveball around 78. In previous seasons, he threw the fastball over 50% of the time, but in 2008 he dropped that way down to 28%. While limiting his fastball, he started throwing his cutter a little more and his curveball a lot more. Cormier threw his curveball almost 12% more in 2008 than in 2007 and 15% more than 2006. His career K/BB rate of 1.25 is poor and his SwStr% is unimpressive, but then again so was Chad Bradford's and Cormier will only cost 675k. He's BABIP and LD% were in line with his career averages so it seems that he is candidate to repeat his 2008 performance or even improve in 2009 behind a better defense.

Carl Crawford LF

We all know Carl Crawford did not have a very good offensive season in 2008, but do we know why? His BB% and BB/K were the highest of his career, his K% was one of his lowest and his LD%, GB% and FB% all fell almost exactly in line with his career numbers. One would assume that his season would have been a success, and it would have been had it not been for his career low .301 BABIP. That career low .301 BABIP follows up a 2007 season that saw his BABIP at an absurd .375, which suggests he was far too lucky in 2007, and far too unlucky in 2008. In 2009, his BABIP should regress toward the mean and hover around his career average of .330, which means we'll see roughly the same production that we've seen from Crawford his whole career. I say roughly because I see him beginning to hit for more power and running a bit less. He's entering his "prime years" and players of his mold tend to start to slow down and bulk up as they age. Look at 2008 as an aberration and expect Crawford's performance in 2009 to fall somewhere in between his 07-08 seasons, with a bit more power, and a bit less speed, mixed in.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Matt Garza RHP

Garza was the key return for the Rays in the Delmon Young trade and was penciled in early on as the Rays 3rd starter. Garza lived up to that role as he was the 3rd most valuable starter on the team. In his first full season in the big leagues, Garza put up a 3.70 ERA/4.14 FIP and showed flashes of brilliance with a one hitter, two shutouts and a masterful Game 7 victory in the ALCS that earned him the series MVP. He did experience some bouts of inconsistency and even immaturity, overall showed that he was everything the Rays wanted. Many fear that the increase in major league innings from 2007 to 2008 will end in an injury for Garza, but as we learned in an August edition of Will Carroll's "Under The Knife" Column, Garza had a surgical procedure in high school that showed some scarring at the end of his elbow ligaments and made his elbow stronger. I'll take Garza's word on this and hope for a healthy 2009. As for his performance on the field, Garza is due for a regression in BABIP (.278 in 2008, .308 career), but he could continue to improve his K/BB which soften that blow and make him a better overall pitcher in 2009.

Gabe Gross OF

2008 saw Gabe Gross get more playing time than he ever had before. He responded fairly well posting a .242/.333/.434/.777 slash line. He was one of the unsung heroes of the team, playing plus defense in the field with an average bat. He was even better against RHP last year (.259/.356/.433) which bodes well for him going forward. With the addition of the other Gabe (Kapler), he will most likely be used in a strict Gabe-platoon in RF. If this is the case, then I would expect we will see pretty sizeable gains in Gross's rate statistics. Even though Gross posted a pretty good LD% of 16.6 last season, which is right around his career average, his BABiP was a low .276. His career BABIP is ten points higher (.287), and his xBABIP last year (according to Dutton and Bendix's research) was a .308. If we plug in .300 for his BABiP (which is about the league average), his slash-line jumps to a much more impressive .257/.352/.440/.792. His wOBA goes from .332 to .348, which makes him a 2.6 win player. If Gross' rate stats improve from only facing righties, then he could conceivably be a 2.5 win platoon player, and that's pretty valuable. The one thing I could see derailing Gross's value is Matt Joyce's readiness to be an everyday player in RF. This would not be a bad deal either because I would imagine the Rays would still be getting good production from RF, which is considered one of their weaknesses.

Jason Hammel RHP

Jason Hammel was arguably the worst pitcher on the team last year. Of the pitchers that registered at least 20 innings last season, only Troy Percival checked in as less valuable (-.7 to -.2). While this seems to be an indictment of Hammel, it also

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

shows just how strong the pitching staff was last year. The Rays were one of a handful of teams that could boast such a small amount of deadweight on their staff. If Hammel doesn't turn it around this season he could be out of a job. He has actually regressed from 2007 despite spending the majority of his time in the bullpen, with his K/BB dropping while his HR/9 stayed about the same. As a result, his FIP rose from 5.05 to 5.25 causing him to fall from just at replacement level to below it. One would assume with the vast number of arms the Rays have for the bullpen that Hammel could be the odd man out even though he is out of options. Jeff Niemann, who is also out of options, seems like a logical replacement as swing-starter/long relief man. Ideally, Hammel will show up to spring training fit and ready to do his best audition for other teams, so the Rays can get decent value for him without just designating him for assignment. If not, maybe he will clear waivers, (which is doubtful), because you can never have too many arms in your system.

J.P. Howell LHP

2008 was a transition year for J.P. Howell, moving from starter to reliever. He was the ultimate bullpen arm, coming in to get a tough lefty or pitching a few innings in extras frames to keep the team in it. His versatility made him one of the most important relievers in baseball last year, and Howell was the Rays second most valuable bullpen arm checking at 1.5 wins. Howell logged a league leading 89.3 innings as reliever, posting a FIP of 3.39 in the process. Going forward, there is no reason to believe Howell will not be just as dominant. CHONE projects Howell to pitch 75 innings with a FIP of 3.27. Howell could easily pitch 75 innings, and if he does I would expect his pLI to increase from the 1.26 from last year. With a 3.25 FIP, 80 innings, and a pLI of 1.3, we could see Howell worth almost 2 wins. I expect that he will be at worst almost that good, but could be even better. Either way he is yet another versatile cog in the Rays' bullpen.

Akinori Iwamura 2B

The definition of average. His wOBA is nearly exactly league average over the last two seasons. And his BB%, LD%, GB%, FB% and BB/K ratio are nearly identical from 2007-2008. So you can pretty safely assume that he'll hit those numbers again in 2009. Iwamura batted lead-off for the Rays last season, but is probably more suited to be a 7-9 hitter. He strikes out too much and walks too little to be a lead off hitter, as shown by his .349 OBP. The move from third to second base in 2008 helped his defensive value considerably. Iwamura had a -2.6 UZR/150 at third base in 2007, while posting a 0.6 UZR/150 at second base in 2008. The good fielding numbers helped offset his relatively poor offensive numbers. The emergence of Willy Aybar last season has led some to think that Aybar deserves more of a look at second base in the near future, thus making Iwamura expendable. Unless there is a drastic swing, be it positive or negative, in

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Iwamura's luck in 2009 expect nearly the same exact numbers he's put up the past two seasons.

John Jaso C/DH

Depending on how poor Jaso's defense is, he could one day start for a team at catcher. Todd Hundley is a name often thrown around, over his career Hundley had a span of seasons where he averaged at least 10 runs above average. Even if Hundley wore an over mitt behind the plate and was worth -20 runs, that still works out to a worthwhile starter. I'm not entirely sold on Jaso being a full time hitter, particularly because I don't think his bat is quite that good at the majors, but a league average hitter and a slightly below average defensive catcher is worth a starting gig.

Elliot Johnson UTL

At the time, this was perhaps the saddest sight since the Sternberg regime began:

DH Elliot Johnson

Yep, April 5th 2008, Elliot Johnson of all people was the Rays designated hitter. Hardly Pat Burrell, heck hardly Jason Bartlett, but thank heavens that era ended quickly. That's not to disrespect Johnson's achievements, for an amateur free agent reaching the majors within six years is a very nice accomplishment, but he's a fringe player at best. Odds are he'll get another major league shot based solely on his "gritty" nature and positional flexibility. A poor man's Ben Zobrist.

Matt Joyce OF

The Rays acquired Joyce for Edwin Jackson in a trade that brings Joyce back home to his native Tampa Bay, Florida. Joyce is a talented 24-year-old outfielder, who many think could be an everyday right fielder for the Rays. The question is when? Joyce breezed through the Tigers organization starting out in A-Ball in 2006 and reaching the Majors in 2008. In mostly platoon work, Joyce hit .252/.339/.492 showing a glimpse of the hitter he could be down the road. He also showed above average defense making him a well-rounded two-way player. The one concern with Joyce as of right now as is the case with many young left handed hitters is his ability to hit left handed pitching. In limited Plate appearances versus lefties he hit .227, but had an OPS of .711. His minor league sample is not much larger, but it shows a similar pattern. He hit well against right-handed hitters (.976 OPS) was mediocre versus lefties (.656 OPS). The good thing about Joyce and the Rays outfield situation is they can be patience with Joyce and let him develop in the minor leagues. With an all Gabe platoon set for 2009, the Rays can afford to let Joyce sit in Durham until they deem him ready for everyday play.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Gabe Kapler OF

The other Gabe joins the Rays to platoon with Gross in RF and be the fourth OF. The more studly, Hebrew version of our ex-Brewer RF tandem mashes lefties. Unlike his left-handed counterpart, he is a legitimate, proven threat at the plate. In his career against LHP, Kapler posts a very impressive .294/.344/.484/.828. Between him and Gross the two Gabe's could OPS over .800 with average defense. That is a pretty valuable platoon. Kapler's glove does not rate as highly as Gross's at this point, but he is still pretty solid (especially in the corners where he projects as a -2 defender). His bat should be better than Gross's as he had a wOBA of .362 last year. I would imagine he will see about 200 Plate appearances next year as the fourth OF and as a pinch-hitter. Fernando Perez is seemingly the only obstacle to him getting a number of chances against lefties. If Perez hits well from both sides of the plate in spring training or the minors, then I could see him taking Kapler's fourth OF spot because he plays better defense and can pinch run.

Scott Kazmir LHP

The struggles of Kazmir has been discussed *ad nauseum* this off-season (and check out all the additional information in the preview), but I will go ahead and give you my take on him for 2009 and beyond. Scott Kazmir is the most talented pitcher this organization has ever seen (I know it's quite an accomplishment to be more talented than Dewon Brazelton), and he may be the best in the AL East. For this reason, his inconsistencies have been a tad worrisome. He was, though, the youngest pitcher on the staff last year and arguably, the most accomplished. Last year he laid an egg for whatever reason. Most attribute it to his lack of slider use due to injury, and I am in that camp. As such, I believe 2009 offers two true outcomes for Kazmir: he comes back healthy or he comes back with health issues. From them, stem a variety of possibilities. If healthy with a regained slider, then I believe we have a Cy Young candidate on our hands. We all know he dominate the three pitching triple-crown categories because he has already been the strike-out leader, he has the stuff and defense to have the best ERA in baseball, and with the rest of the team's contributions he could lead the league in wins. This is what I hope for, this is what I think will happen (to some extent), and this will help us be the best team in baseball. The other options stem primarily from a lack of health. He could scrap the slider like last year and be merely a decent starter for five innings at a time. He could be great, and then hit the DL. I do caution those that claim that he can not stay healthy or pitch an entire year; he pitched over 200 innings in 2007. Before that he was the only pitcher worth anything on a cellar dweller, and as such he was protected like the jewel he was. He was limited in games and starts for his (and the team's) best interest in the long-term.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Evan Longoria 3B

Last year Longoria put up one of the great seasons ever by a rookie third baseman. He showed the patience and power at the plate and the savvy in the field we had all been drooling about. The only downside was the injury due to getting beamed on the hand (with seemingly no lingering effects at the plate), and possibly his struggles with breaking balls. The truly amazing thing about that is he seemingly just scratched the surface. With a full year in the majors under his belt, I would expect that Longoria is an even better ball-player next year. His numbers may not be as gaudy due to luck, possible injury, or pitchers keying on him; but I would expect that he sees growth in a few categories. Assuming his struggles with breaking balls (particularly outside) will subside at least a little, he will likely see gains in a few important peripheral statistics. Longoria's K-rate last year was 27.2%, and his career minor league K-rate was 18%. While most players see their K-rates rise when they get to the majors, this is one area we could likely see improve. Similarly, his BB-rate was only 9.3%, down from his minor-league 10.9%. This drop-off is not that big, but it is significant. Every projection system has Longoria's BB/K increasing, and only Oliver does not foresee an increase in OBP. I really do not see any areas he might regress, but it is always possible. His HR/FB%, BABIP, and contact rates look good. If he can get his O-Swing % down from a relatively high 26.5% he could become one of the best hitters in baseball.

Dioner Navarro C

Defensively, Navarro continues to impress. Since joining the team in 2006, Navarro has had an average CS% of 32.3 and was ranked as the 7th best defensive catcher by the fielding bible. Offensively, 2009 will be a big season in the development of Dioner Navarro. Up to this point we have two full seasons of numbers on Navi. In 2007, we saw him put up a slash line of .227/.286/.356 which was comparable to John Buck. However, in 2008 he blossomed into an all star with a line of .295/.349/.407 which was closer to Russell Martin. So which is it? We really don't know. Navarro's BABIP jumped from .253 to .321 from 2007 to 2008. His career BABIP of .292 suggests two things; he was very unlucky in 2007 and may have been a bit too lucky in 2008. The good thing is he maintained his LD%, O-Swing%, BB% all while reducing his K% by almost 6%. He'll never hit for much power with of a career ISO of .113 that puts him on a Paul Lo Duca level. If you're looking for a prediction on 2009 for Navarro, I'd say a safe bet would be .270/.330/.390 with good defense. If the Rays can get that, I think everybody will be happy.

Joe Nelson RHP

The Joe Nelson signing may have been slid under the radar as compared to the Burrell signing, but it might end up being as important. It might seem unlikely, but it is possible

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

he ends up as valuable as Burrell. Relying primarily on a fastball-changeup combination, Nelson had his best year yet last year. He posted a 3.45 FIP in 54 big league innings. He also had a FIP of 1.72 in 25 innings in AAA. He does have fly-ball tendencies, but an impressive K/9 (10.0) last year helped to negate them. His K/BB of 2.73 would have ranked him second last year behind Balfour in the Rays bullpen. How exactly could Nelson end up being as valuable as Burrell? Aside from injury or a massive break-down, Burrell projects to be worth about 2 wins. Last year, Grant Balfour came out of nowhere to be worth 2.2 wins in only 58 innings. If Nelson pitches 66 innings at a pLI of 1.72 (Wheeler's workload), then he will be worth 2 wins with a FIP of 3.3. This does not represent a massive improvement, and if he only gives the Rays what he did last year in Wheeler's role he will still be worth 1.7 wins. Either way, the Rays signed him for \$1.3 million and control his rights for two more years. He only needs to pitch 50 innings at a pLI of .8 and a FIP of 4.25 to be "worth" \$1.5 million. That is the reason Nelson seems like it could be the best signing of the off-season.

Jeff Niemann RHP

After pitching in Triple A the past two seasons, with a brief stint in the majors in 2008, Jeff Niemann is out of options and cannot be sent down to Durham without clearing waivers, which he assuredly would not. That means he'll likely be on the Rays major league roster for the entire season. In what capacity is still to be determined. In repeating AAA this past season Niemann was worse than he was in 2007, which you don't expect from someone of his experience. His ERA went down, but his FIP and HR/9 rose while his K/BB dropped. Niemann has also never worked more than 150 innings in any season, which points to a move to the bullpen. However if David Price is not ready to start right away in 2009, Niemann could step up and be the team's fifth starter in the interim. There have not been many pitchers of Niemann's size in the majors, Randy Johnson and Chris Young jump out, and it seems it takes longer for taller pitchers to develop. Niemann is 26, which is old for a rookie pitcher with his potential. Expect to see Niemann in the Rays pen for most of the 2009 season, probably in the sixth or seventh inning slot along with some spot starts.

Carlos Pena 1B

As expected, Pena was unable to duplicate his huge numbers from 2007, but still put up the 2nd best season of his career in 2008. For the second straight season, Pena smashed 30 home runs while driving in 100 runs and walking nearing 100 times. Even with a hamstring injury, broken finger and a torn abdominal muscle, he still led the Rays in wOBA by narrowly edging out stud third basemen, Evan Longoria. He also won his first career gold glove. Pena will probably never be a six WAR player again, but it's foolish not to expect him to be in the four to four and a half range in 2009. There is not much to dislike about Pena's game, but his K% rose to 33.9 last season. Part of that can be attributed to the injuries that forced him to alter his swing. Pena is currently recovering from surgery to repair his abdominal muscle and expects to be ready for spring training,

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

which means a healthy start to the season. In a more balanced lineup, look for him to be a mix of 2007 and 2008 which means .900 OPS, slugging 1B with above average defense.

Troy Percival RHP

Percival's 2008 season was a small part brilliant and a large part train wreck all rolled into one. He started the season out great. In April he appeared in nine games, throwing nine innings, allowed zero runs while picking up five saves. The ensuing five months weren't so pretty. He continued to save games in the ugliest ways imaginable, while somehow avoiding getting losses along the way. After that first month I don't think there was a time when any Rays fan felt comfortable when he entered a game. He was obviously hurt on a number of occasions and was too stubborn, while Maddon was being too loyal, to say anything even though it was becoming a detriment to the team. He simply looked completely out of shape for most of the season, seemingly pulling a muscle every time he had to run to cover a bag. His K/9 was the third worst of his career, while his BB/9 was the worst it had been in nine seasons. He maintained a ridiculously low BABIP of .181 because of the league best defense playing behind him. His FIP was 5.87 which is so bad it almost makes it look like he was trying to fail. As sad as all of those numbers are, and as much as Rays fans would like him to retire so the team can recoup his \$4 million salary, Percival is still coming back in 2009 and if deemed healthy will still get the ball in the 9th inning for this team. Expect a similar season to 2009, if our hearts and stomachs can take it.

Fernando Perez OF

We know two definite things about Fernando Perez; he's smart and he's fast. A September call-up, Perez's ability to get on base and make things happen earned him a roster spot in the playoffs. Besides his stellar baserunning, He is also an above average outfielder making him very valuable as a fourth outfielder. He put up a solid slash line in Durham .286/.359/.387 and put up nice numbers in 72 Plate appearances with the Rays(.250/.348/.433). While his slugging was a bit high, his on-base skills are real. At every level of his career, Perez has been over 10% K rate and his 18% O-Swing in limited Major League action showed an advanced eye. The only thing that screams "fluke" in Perez's game is an extremely high BABIP. Over the past three seasons in the minors Perez averaged a BABIP of .403. This is because Perez is so fast he can leg out many ground balls and minor league defenses are not on par with major league ones. An example of this is Joey Gathright who has a BABIP of .382 in the minors in 2007, but has a Major League BABIP of .319. The plan for Perez in 2009 calls for a lot of shuttle trips between Durham and Tampa. He could start out as the opening day center fielder if B.J. Upton is still hurt, but is expected to spend most of his time playing everyday in Durham and working on his hitting from the right side of the plate exclusively.

David Price LHP

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Wunderkind David Price is an interesting case in 2009. I'm sure most of the fan base would like to see him break camp as the team's fifth starter, but I don't see that being the case. Yes he has overpowering stuff and pitched well in his short time in the big leagues in 2008, but that doesn't guarantee him of anything. Price needs to develop a third pitch, a changeup, if he's going to dominate at the big league level. That's why I hope to see him being attached to James Shields' hip during spring training, and beginning the season at AAA Durham. If he can perfect a change-up, he can be Johan Santana style dominant. He was unlucky at AAA last season, posting a 4.50 ERA that can be explained by a .395 BABIP while his FIP was an excellent 2.81. The BABIP will surely fall back to earth, and with it the ERA as well. The Rays have a very capable starter in Jeff Niemann who can step in and keep Price's spot in the rotation warm. The Rays have no reason to rush him into the rotation, even if Niemann can't hold down the position the Rays have Mitch Talbot, and dare I say Jason Hammel, to man the fort. Last year with the Rays Price posted a FIP of 3.42 and a BABIP of .225, and I can't see those numbers sustaining for a rookie pitcher. I see Price throwing 120-130 innings while posting a FIP hovering around 4. If he can do that he should give the Rays a huge boost in the latter part of the season.

Shawn Riggins C

Riggins BABIP was .242 in 2008, amazingly that's an *improvement* over his career .231 average. That has to rise at some point; otherwise, Riggins line drives are just absurdly weak. Fernando Rodney hitting Riggins in the chest was perhaps the most concerning moment on the field in a while, ranking up there with Edwin Jackson being hit in the head with a line drive and then in the jaw by a Carl Crawford throw. Somehow he stayed in the game and scored the winning run. Riggins also saw an inning in left field, but unfortunately we never got to see his range or arm in the outfield.

Derek Rodriguez RHP

Toss another highly fungible strikeout/groundball heavy reliever into the Rays system. Rodriguez is the Rule 5 pick from the Chicago White Sox system. His awkward delivery helps offset his lack of velocity. The best-case scenario: Rodriguez hangs on, becomes the Rays long-man, and perhaps improves his standing with time. Worst-case: he's returned to the White Sox organization and all the words written about him become rather useless. Of course, there is also Dewon Day in the minors. Day has similar tendencies, a similar background, and has options left with the added bonus of not returning to another organization if he does not make the 25-man roster. If nothing else, consider that Rodriguez is exactly the type of pitcher that organizations should stock up on. With the volatile nature of relievers, it's important to have a bunch of pseudo-average/slightly above replacement player relievers for unimportant innings.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Justin Ruggiano OF

Justin Ruggiano is an interesting case. He's always hit very well in the minor leagues, but that success has never translated to success at the major league level. In 2008, Ruggiano had an impressive slash line of .315/.374/.537 with Durham. Yet, in 76 at bats with the Rays he hit a terrible .197/.247/.329 with four walks and 27 strikeouts. There have been whispers that the organization isn't too high on Ruggiano's attitude and that's why he's never been given a real shot with the team. Or maybe his career BB% of 5.3 and K% of 35.6. When he did play last season he was a superb defender, posting a combined 21.7 UZR/150 in the outfield. Out of anyone on the team, I think Ruggiano would benefit most from a change of scenery, because barring injury I do not see any way he's ever going to get significant at bats for this team. For his sake that better happen soon before he gets the dreaded "Quad-A player" label slapped on him. That being said he should see a lot of time at AAA, and with a crowded outfield situation don't expect Ruggiano to come close to the 76 at bats he received last season.

James Shields RHP

In 2008 "Big Game James" had the 2nd best K per 100 pitch rate on the team behind Scott Kazmir and was a full K over the league average. He made 27 starts of at least six innings pitched including 16 starts of at least seven innings pitched and three or less earned runs. Shields will enter his 4th season in 2009 as the old man of the Rays staff at the prime age of 27. In 2008 his numbers as a 26 year old are pretty much in line with that of a 26 year old John Smoltz in 1993. Over the past two seasons he has been a model of consistency. He has exactly 215 innings pitched in each season, maintained an exact BABIP of .292. Knowing this, his projection for 2009 is pretty simple. Expect another 200 inning season with around 175 K's and an FIP around 3.8. I'd also look for Shields to get back to his change up more. In 2008 he threw about four percent less change ups than his career average. If he gets this back to around 30% expect an increase in his K/9 from 6.70 to about 7.50 which is in line with his career numbers.

Brian Shouse LHP

Wanted: left-handed reliever, pay is decent, must have Milwaukee Brewer experience. Between Choate and Shouse the Rays own a monopoly on former Brew Crew LOOGYs. Shouse is an older gentleman with another sidarmish delivery that generates groundballs at an above average clip. Sometimes I wonder what it's like knowing your entire livelihood is riding on which hand you can throw a baseball with, but then I realize that's human and I should mind my business. The biggest loser in the signing of Shouse is Choate, who otherwise would've have a realistic shot at grabbing the specialist's tag in spring.

Andrew Sonnanstine RHP

Sonnanstine gives Mitch Talbot and company hope. Sonnanstine's refinement of his cutter seemed to help keep hitters off guard, as he allowed only three more homeruns in 60 additional innings. Having a decent BABIP helped him with the casual fans too, which in return helped to keep his ERA low and his ERA+ around 100. Sonnanstine's K/BB ratio isn't quite what it was in the minors, which is more on his strikeout decline than anything else. The debate over whether Sonnanstine is a "viable competitor" or "belongs" should all but be over, instead replaced by terms like "Innings eater" and "grinder". If the Rays are lucky, Sonnanstine will have a Justin Duchscherer-like season during his arbitration years, landing them a decent return and allowing a cheaper and equally as good talent to slide into the rotation. Of course, arbitrators are likely to be stuck in the 1960's of baseball analysis, meaning Sonnanstine's salary stays low.

Mitch Talbot RHP

James Shields + Andrew Sonnanstine = Mitch Talbot? Perhaps. Talbot has good control, a plus pitch(!), and the makings of an undervalued starter/reliever type. Talbot will likely never have a shot at starting with the Rays, which raises the question of his trade value. Speaking of which, how does the Zobrist/Talbot for Aubrey Huff deal look now, after Huff and Zobrist's flukey seasons? Back to Talbot, he has control over five pitches, that seems a bit excessive, but some of those "pitches" are simply different grips. In spite of being a "pitchability" type starter, Talbot's homerun allowed numbers are pretty good for a guy also throwing inside of a hitters park

Dale Thayer RHP

Thayer is a career minor leaguer who was acquired by the Rays in a trade for Russell Brandon. The Rays liked him enough that was added to the 40 man roster this off-season to protect him from the Rule 5 Draft. It's hard to figure out why Thayer hasn't received at least a small cup of coffee in the majors, but at age 28, he has yet to take a sip in the major leagues. His best season just happened to be in 2008, but the Rays bullpen was so good he never got his shot. Over the past three years his FIP has dropped from 3.32 to 2.56 to 2.41 all while maintaining a solid K/BB ratio. In 2008 he struck out 75 batters in 68.1 IP and boasted a SwStr% of 11.5%. He did give up 73 hits, but also had a very unlucky BABIP of .378 and only had two balls leave the yard on him. If you asked me in November, I would've said he had a decent shot to make the team, but with the recent signings of relievers to Major League deals it would seem that because of his option status, he is destined to start the season in the minors once again.

B.J. Upton CF

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Amidst a season of turmoil and animosity, 2008 still saw Upton improve in some aspects despite health issues. Upton appeared more comfortable in center field, walked more, struck out less, and despite seeing his batting average drop nearly 0.030 points only had a 0.003 point decrease in on-base percentage. Oh, and Upton managed to do all that with a torn labrum. His batting eye is perhaps the best in the league, and while he did take a number of called strike threes, you have to wonder how much of that should be accredited to the labrum and how much of it is simply Upton not liking the pitch. There are some *other* things Upton must work on, but frankly, if Upton is a 4.3 win player when he's not giving maximum effort then he might be amongst the 10 most talented players in baseball. A healthy Upton has the potential to be a very, very special player in 2009. Hopefully, he'll encroach on 700 plate appearances. The most memorable moment of Upton's season has to be the post-season, and perhaps most specifically his running on water exhibition in the World Series. Joe Buck and Tim McCarver were unavailable to comment.

Dan Wheeler RHP

Wheeler's 2008 was just all around odd. His BABIP was an unsustainably low .202 (career: .298), his strikeouts and velocity dropped, as did his slider usage, his flyball and walk rates took a hike up, and so did his FIP and leverage index. What does all that mean? Well it's a bad combination moving forward. His contract isn't bad in a vacuum, but in the context of the Rays the idea of paying an average or slightly below average middle reliever four million a year is hardly appealing. Hope for the best from Wheeler, and that this is not a decline, but rather an outlier. Otherwise, the Wheeler extension will be one based on assumptions that simply never came to be.

Ben Zobrist UTL

A career middle infielder, Zobrist played all over the diamond in spring training as the Rays groomed him for a super utility role. A broken bone in his hand would keep him out for the month of April and he only played sparingly in May before being sent down. He returned to the Rays as Zorilla and hit five home runs in his next 63 plate appearances. He was sent down again only to return to Zorilla/Late Inning Lightning status in August. From August 5 through the end of the season he hit .266/.367/.516 in 39 games. So how did a player who has 13 career professional home runs in 1,057 PA hit 12 in just 227? Devine intervention? Performance Enhanced Deities? Or a simple change in approach? The jury is still out in this one. There were a few other positives in Zobrist's 2008 that show signs of improvement for 2009. His plate discipline improved as his BB% rose from a career 7.4% to 11.2% which was sparked by an O-Swing% that dropped from 26.7% in 07 to 17.8% in 08. Defensively, Zobrist is a butcher at short stop with a career UZR of -6.8, but in the outfield he looked about average, however, it's a small sample size. So what we know going into 2009 is Zobrist seems to have improved his plate approach for the good, but we do not know if the power surge is real.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

The following players were added recently. We felt they did not require lengthy profiles of their own, and instead will present them in a truncated and brief fashion.

Winston Abreu RHP

Think Al Reyes. Decent strikeout numbers but generates flyballs. .

Jason Childers RHP

Take two. Childers gets grounders and hopefully this time around lasts longer than the previous one.

Dewon Day RHP

A groundball getting reliever with good strikeout rates

Morgan Ensberg CN

This year's Eric Hinske? Only gets paid 650k if he makes the roster.

Jason Isringhausen RP

Hooray for more fungible relievers.

Adam Kennedy MI

Awesome defender, but his bat is made of animal spirits.

Ray Olmedo INF

The definition of a replacement level infielder, hopefully he'll never see the Trop.

On Prospecting by Kiley McDaniel

[This article was first published in March 2008 at saberscouting.com]

Trying to rank prospects is just that, trying. Despite a number of attempts to shoehorn it into a science, you just can't beat any sense into a process with so many variables.

I can't help but think four things (in this order) when I look over the [historical Baseball America Top 100 Prospects Lists](#).

1. Seriously, they ranked him there?
2. If I was in their position at the time, would I have ranked him there, too?
3. This is pretty unfair in general, this business of breaking apart old prospect lists.
4. But is there a better way to do this?



Personally, I've thought about these four things a whole lot more than a human should. And the answer to the most important question of this group, number four, is "I think so."

For those of you that instinctively heard an affirmative answer to a big baseball mystery and are scanning the rest of the article for a fancy table, graph, list, bullet points, or big bolded words, you aren't going to get them. I said "I think so." Maybe, maybe not. I don't have a solution, and there will never be a correct answer.

Now that I've walked you onto the ledge, I'll empty some of the ideas that have been kicking around in my head about ways to refine the art.

There is a section of Malcolm Gladwell's excellent "[Blink](#)" where a hospital that has a poor rate of correctly identifying and treating heart conditions wanted to improve their diagnosis success rate. What would you do to accomplish this? Bring in high-priced

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

experts, complicated machinery, cumbersome computer programs? This hospital brought in the heaviest of hitters: the spreadsheet.

They took information on each past heart patient and their symptoms and then figured out which symptoms occurred most often in patients with actual heart issues. Keep in mind, there are thousands of relevant pieces of information to consider in this analysis, or in predicting anything about a serious subject like health, specifically heart conditions. The hospital narrowed it down to a three-point checklist.

If you didn't have at least two of these three symptoms when you walked into the emergency room, you weren't a priority to treat, or were just sent home, being told you were fine (because you probably were). This hospital quickly became the best in the world in this field, at quickly diagnosing heart conditions, with the new three-point checklist as the only difference from when they were originally among the worst in the same field.



The most important part of that story is that the three-point checklist was roughly thirty times smaller than the original checklist.

Essentially, they solved a complex problem (as best it could be solved) by breaking it down into its components and simplifying the decision process so that a monkey could do it. Should analyzing baseball prospects really be more complicated than diagnosing a heart condition?

I don't technically have a prospect list "secret sauce" to rival Baseball Prospectus writer [Nate Silver's Playoff Secret Sauce](#), but if there was one example I could give to illustrate the use of a similar checklist method, it would be Franklin Morales.

Let me start by saying that Morales is a fine prospect and has already contributed to winning a pennant—he's already a fine MLB player and has a huge ceiling and nasty stuff. Also, more goes into an assessment of a player than just those factors mentioned below. This isn't meant to replace a scouting report, but as a case study in the method, using an extreme example.

That being said, if I were to, off the top of my head, make a reverse-Secret Sauce for starting pitching prospects, he has the top three in spades.

1. He doesn't have command of his pitches, and not in an effectively wild way, in a "make sure your affairs are in order before you come to the plate" way. The indications

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

from scouts I've talked to and the video I've seen is that this is a fundamental problem that will never be completely fixed.

2. He doesn't have a third pitch. For relievers, this doesn't really matter at all, but Morales is a starter, is valued as such by the Rockies and is ranked as such by those who do the rankings. Some say he doesn't need it because his first two pitches are that good, some say it will come in time. This is the starting pitching anti-checklist and he's two-for-two.



3. He doesn't consistently repeat his mechanics or arm slot for multiple innings. This problem can come in different flavors and each have different consequences. A big side effect of this is problem is lack of command (stated above) but can go as far as injury problems (doesn't appear Morales' is that flavor, though). [His spring his velocity was down](#), and while this could be due to any number of factors or even just starting to stretch his arm out, it's the type of thing that could happen often in conjunction with these issues.

Going back to the heart condition example, I wouldn't put up a similar overall "red flag" on a starting pitching prospect unless he has two of these three problems. Morales happens to be a perfect storm, with all three problems and a huge upside, creating a big gap in perceptions.

To quantify some of this, Baseball America ranks him 8th overall and Kevin Goldstein has him at 13th. Having not gone through the proper process to rank a bunch of prospects yet, but just eyeballing comparables in the lists, I'd put Morales between 50 and 100.

I love upside as much as the next guy, and I feel Morales is still one of the top 100 prospects in the minors, but we all know many, many of the top 100 guys fail, so why bet on someone in your top 25 prospects with three out of three red flags?

As the last in the cavalcade of caveats, Morales could "figure it out," with his mechanics, feel, command, changeup, consistency, approach, etc. and take off into the stratosphere as a starter and be everything everyone thinks he'll be and more. And I'll be wrong, it wouldn't be the first time. I'll also be happy for him. He also would have securely been in my top 100 prospects, so was I really that wrong?

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

All that being said, I think this approach is beneficial. There is no reason to make something that is so tough to predict more complicated than it needs to be. There is a huge sample size of players that have gone through the minors and, even if anecdotal, we have basic maxims of what the most important things are for prospects to develop in order to be successful.

If you're being asked a question, being given rules that are true the vast majority of the time, are you going to bet on the small chance that the rules suddenly aren't correct? Or that you're smarter than everyone else before you? A skeptic might start invoking economic principles and talking about arbitrage and inefficient markets, but doesn't that sound like over-thinking something that no one can predict even with unlimited information? Sticking with the time-tested percentages can cover a multitude of sins.

Now that we've covered the short checklist approach, I'll shift gears and give you a hypothetical to ponder:

I was having dinner with a friend that works in for a team and we somehow got on the topic of what type of prospect you would pick if given the choice by your GM in a trade. If you knew a player would be a quick impact guy, then fizzle (where you could then trade him, since you know everything in this hypothetical) or a later-peaking All-Star type. I illustrated the question with recent players to make the question one based in some reality: [Ben Grieve](#) or [Aramis Ramirez](#)?

Don't get too worked up about the players themselves, just the type of players they represent. Grieve is the early-peaking player with old man skills in his early 20's (power, patience, corner position) that peaks in his age-22 rookie season and is a fringe starter by 25 and out of baseball at 29. Ramirez is a quick-to-the-majors type as well, but doesn't peak until his age-26 season (still a normal time to peak, just later than Grieve). Ramirez has one above-average year in his first four seasons, then breaks out in years five and six, at the end of his team's contract control, being paid the market rate (translation: over-paid) the rest of his career.

Like I said before, forget the exact players to a degree, and focus on the profile: early-peaking fringe All-Star, or normal-peaking perennial All-Star. Now, from a trade standpoint, if you know what their career holds, all things being equal, which player do you take?

I argued, in a devil's advocate sense for Ben Grieve (since I knew the other guy would pick Ramirez). Grieve puts up \$10 million or more of productivity while making the minimum, and once he hits arbitration, you trade him to a less-savvy team (preferably run by Chuck LaMar) for another fringe-All Star with a better immediate future. Economically, that's probably the right answer.

The team official argued for Aramis Ramirez due to his job description. He said, regardless of knowing the future or not, his job in a trade is to identify the best player to trade for, and Aramis Ramirez became the best player. Looking back 10 years on a trade

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

for the definitive winner and loser, picking Ramirez is more right. Both answers are right in their own way. There are also many more factors in play than the ones discussed, but this is just a hypothetical.

So, what was the point of all this? I'm not really sure there was one. My English teachers will be disappointed to see lack of a clear thesis and baseball readers will be disappointed to see a lack of bombastic conclusion jumping. Hopefully, I got your brain thinking about a better way to tackle prospecting, with a simple yet powerful idea from the medical field and, for Rays fans, an infuriatingly familiar game of 'Would You Rather?'



Prospects, Ect.

Kyle Ayers RHP

Ayers was a 2007 draft pick and has pitched well in relief for Princeton over the past two seasons. He is a solid 6'4, 220 pounds and is still developing at the age of just 19 years old. His K/BB rate of 8.33 was third best in the entire organization behind Jeremy Hellickson's 16 and Ryan Reid's 15 at Montgomery. He has walked just 11 batters in 64.1 career innings. The knock on him is he's hittable. In 2008 he's H/9 was a whopping 12.96. He seems like a likely to pitch in 2009 for the Hudson Valley Renegades in short season ball.

Nick Barnese RHP

The Rays 3rd round pick in 2007 out of High School was the only stud prospect of the group at Hudson Valley. Barnese, who just turned 20 years old earlier this January, is coming off a dominating season at short season ball. He averaged 11.45 K's per nine and boasted a Sub 2 FIP. The only knock was his BB/9 jumped from 0.99 in 2007(rookie ball) to 3.27 in 2008. He's a slim righty with an arsenal that includes an above average FB (91-93 mph may touch 95) with late movement ala Matt Garza and a slurve type breaking ball with hard late action that is improving. His change-up is far behind, but he has plenty of time. The best thing we've read about Barnese is his swagger. It's been said that his confidence sometimes borders arrogance which is what you want from a pitcher. As Kevin Gengler of Raysprospects.com pointed out the Rays may pair him up with Matt Moore in Bowling Green as left/right tandem similar to the McGee/Davis team we saw before McGee's injury.

Tim Beckham SS

There's no reason to sugar coat it, Beckham's initial exposure to the world of professional baseball is ugly on the stat sheet. Thankfully the important thing for a player of his age is simply showing the potential to develop skills and maturing into a good player. Beckham's the new regime's first high school player taken in the first round, meaning his track to the majors is likely to be a few years slower than David Price or Evan Longoria's. Ideally, the Rays would've been able to land an Alex Rodriguez or even Justin Upton level prospect, and while Beckham appears to be closer to the latter, there's a good chance Beckham becomes the next Edgar Renteria, a solid player nonetheless. The one thing to watch out for – outside of conditioning – would be Beckham's ability to change his swing mechanics and use his lower body more. In high school Beckham's swing was almost entirely driven by his upper body.

Reid Brignac SS

Yeah, 2008 was quite poor, but 2006 was quite grand, and 2007 is probably a more accurate representation of what we should expect from Brignac in his career. He took an offensive step back by every stretch of the imagination, yet Brignac still upped his defensive game. A near league average hitter who plays shortstop and is worth $0 < x < 5$ runs defensively is pretty damn valuable. In the end you're going to wind up with a shortstop worth $2 < x < 3$ wins. Hanley Ramirez he's not, but someone like Khalil Greene is more realistic. That's valuable. Jason Bartlett and Akinori Iwamura will be free agent within the next three seasons and while there will always be buy-low and undervalued types on the market, the Rays have a void of internal options behind Brignac. Moving Brignac when his value to other teams and value to the Rays is at equilibrium is probably foolhardy.

Jason Corder OF

Corder was the Rays 7th round pick out of Long Beach State University in the 2008 draft. Corder is one of only a handful of Rays minor leaguers with plus power potential. With that power comes a lot of swings and misses as you'll see in his 2008 numbers. He struck out 18% of the time at Hudson Valley and showed poor plate discipline with a walk rate of just 4.6%. However, he did show some of that power potential with a .456 SLG that ranked second on the team. He has an above average arm in the outfield, but doesn't have much speed so he is well suited for right field. He's a bit older for the lower minor leagues, but with good numbers and college experience, he could quickly rise through a system that is lacking offensive prospects

Wade Davis RHP

Fresh off being named the fifteenth best prospect in baseball by Keith Law, Wade Davis had a slight setback last year. Repeating AA he only posted 3.96 FIP in 107.6 IP at AA. This followed a 2.94 FIP in 80 innings there the year before. Apparently in the first half of the season he struggled somewhat with his fastball (it slipped in velocity and he relied to heavily on the two-seamer). Law does say that he seemed to find himself in the second half which may be evident in his AAA numbers. His ERA and K/9 returned to form—2.72 and 9.34 respectively—but his FIP stayed relatively constant at 3.94 due to increased BB/9 and HR/9 numbers. If Davis is to regain some of the luster—he dropped to 33 in Law's latest top 100—he will have to continue to strike guys out but limit the HRs and walks. The Rays would love for Davis to be the power pitcher he seemed to be prior to last year when he posted K/9 numbers of 10.17, 10.11, and 9.11. In a perfect world, Davis will go back to throwing hard and striking guys out using his plus-fastball and two plus breaking pitches while limiting the walks and keeping the ball in the park.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Fortunately, there is no rush with the major league rotation full and two solid fill-ins in Niemann and Talbot.

Reid Fronk COF

There's no question Fronk has tallied some impressive offensive totals in his short minor league career, but it's hard to call him a prospect just yet. Assuming he's at least average defensively, Fronk should be able to stick in a corner outfield spot and ride his bat to the top of the majors. He's got a name that should one day stick in the Baseball Almanac. In all seriousness though, Fronk is creeping up the Rays-centric prospects lists.

Matt Gorgen RHP

Gorgen was one of a few college arms to pitch in short season A-Ball. He was selected in the 16th rd in the 2008 draft and made an immediate impact on Hudson Valley. His K/9 of 13.7 led the team by a full strike out. He also showed excellent control by only walked five batters in 23 innings making his K/BB rate a shinny 7.0. Along with that excellent K-Rate is an excellent ground ball percentage of 66.7% His FIP of 2.07 was only a notch higher than his ERA of 1.96. Gorgen is a bit old for his level, but should move up to Bowling Green in 2009 and if his numbers look the same, maybe Charlotte County by years end.

James Houser Jr. LHP

The left-handed pitching prospect has had a modicum of success at every level. He does not over-power you, but he consistently gets guys out. The left-hander has not had a K/9 over 9 since 41 innings of rookie ball, but he also does not kill himself by walking batters. Until this year when he struggled with injuries, he had never had a K/BB under two. Despite being primarily a fly-ball pitcher he has limited his home run totals which has made him a pretty decent prospect. Has had a little more success against lefties than righties, but he does not scream LOOGY. He will probably start the year in AAA since he repeated AA last year with pretty good results. Depending on health he will likely be part of a Bulls rotation that could be the best in AAA next year.

Jeremy Hellickson RHP

One of the more intriguing pitching prospects in baseball because he does not have overpowering stuff, but he has just dominated at every level. Last year he posted an amazing 16.6 K/BB in his first go around in high A. After moving up, he did not fare quite as well with only a 5.27 K/BB. Overall last year with split equally between Vero Beach and Montgomery, Hellickson posted a FIP of 3.68 with 162 Ks and 20 BBs in 155 IP along with 22 HRs. 15 of the homers came in his 76.6 IP in Montgomery. Hellickson

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

will begin 2009 in Montgomery where he will try to dominate AA like he did to start A+. His stuff should not be an issue as he works in the low to mid-nineties with good life on the fastball with two off-speed offerings (curveball-changeup) that are both advanced for his age. Obviously it will also help that he already has an incredible feel for the strike-zone. The best description I have heard was from Kiley McDaniel:

There are a lot of "good" pitchers in the FSL, but there's one that will take average stuff and mix it with plus intangibles to become a solid starter in the big leagues. Hellickson is a guy with better stuff than that merely "good" group, and also has those plus intangibles that lead me to say he'll overachieve. Hellickson's demeanor, approach, and feel for his craft are all very impressive.

Sounds like the kind of pitcher you would love to have on your staff to me.

Rhyme Hughes 1B

As good defensive 1B who has been somewhat inconsistent at the plate, Hughes has been old for his league the past few years, and after what seemed like a breakout in 2007 he had a decent year at the plate in 2008. At the tail-end of the year in 2007, he had his season cut short by a severe facial injury where he had to get a number of false teeth. His average suffered in 2008 despite a favorable BABIP because of a very high K-rate (28.4%). His walk rate was an area of strength at 10.4% as were his power numbers. He did dominate in the Arizona Fall League this year, but once again his age makes it a little less special. He has not produced the kind of power you would hope for as a 1B at his age, but if he improves his ability to make solid contact then he could prove to be a decent bench bat. He will start the year as the starting first baseman in Durham, and it is very unlikely he sees the big team this year. If he improves to the point where he can hit .280/.370/.440 then he may find himself as a very useful bench player or starter for a bad team. I would not hold my breath, though.

Jacob Jefferies C

The third round pick out of UC-Davis, Jake Jefferies, got off to a good start in Hudson Valley posting a slash-line of .315/.379/.415. He only struck out only 22 times in 264 Plate appearances coupled with 21 walks. He shows an impressive mastery of the strike-zone that is evident in his walk-rate and his K-rate. As a catcher if he can continue this high-contact approach then you can forgive his not developing more power (ISO of only .118). As a receiver, he seems to be adequate at worst. He is a good athlete behind the plate, but he allowed 17 SB while only catching 2 potential thieves. He will need to improve this area of his game if he is going to stay behind the plate. It seems he will start the year in low-A as the system is chock full of catchers.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Desmond Jennings OF

One of the biggest tease in the Rays organization. His 2007 season saw him with a slash line of .315/.401/.465 with 45 steals in 99 games before his season was shut down with a meniscus tear in his knee. He only managed to play in 24 games in 2008 due to back and shoulder injuries. When healthy Jennings is the best offensive prospect in the Rays system, it's keeping him on the field that's the problem. Jennings plays excellent defense, using his speed to chase down anything hit near him in centerfield. Jennings also has great patience at the plate, never afraid to draw a walk and steal a base. Jennings is going to open 2009 with the Port Charlotte Stone Crabs of the FSL. If he's healthy he'll put up excellent numbers again and make a case for a late season call up, while giving the Rays a tough decision in 2010.

D.J. Jones OF

The 11th round pick in 2007 got his first taste of pro-ball in 2008, and it was not what some were hoping. The toolsy outfielder struggled quite a bit in rookie-ball only hitting .227/.293/.320. He struggled making contact (24% K-rate) and suffered from a surprisingly low BABIP (.292) given his skill-set and the low level. His BB-rate was one thing that was a positive for the prospect at that level (8.5%). He will start the year in low A, although he is a bit old for the league (21 at the start of the season). You will have to take the wait and see approach with this great athlete, but hopefully we will not have to wait too long.

Kyeong Kang OF

In two years of short-season ball Kyeong Kang has been pretty good. Nothing about him stands out, he does not seem to have plus-power, plus-speed, or great on-base skills. He does seem to be a fairly complete player for his age (i.e. seems to do most everything okay). He posted a line of .278/.338/.463 last year playing primarily in LF where he is likely to stay and play good defense. He has solid speed, but it has not shown on the base-paths as he has stolen 3 and 6 bases in 53 and 69 games. He has a solid arm, but not spectacular which will likely limit him to LF. His K-rates were a little higher than you would like to see at that level. He will start the year in Bowling Green, and it would be encouraging to see him add some power next year since he is limited to a corner outfield spot.

Jake McGee LHP

Jake McGee was one of the Rays top pitching prospects before getting injured and undergoing Tommy John Surgery in 2008. He posted K/9's of 11.49, 11.19, and 11.57 with FIP's of 2.85, 2.69, and 3.41 in his three stops from 06-07. He started the 2008 season at AA Montgomery and struggled more than he ever had before. McGee started

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

15 games and even though his BABIP was a very low .277 he still posted a 3.94ERA and a 4.00FIP, while his K/9 dropped to 7.53. McGee will be back sometime in the summer, and as with any TJ patient you never know how they'll perform when they first get back. With the amount of starting pitchers the Rays have there have been talks about grooming McGee to be a closer upon his return. The Rays have no need to rush him back, so expect McGee to gradually ease his way back into pitching in 2009. He's far too valuable to risk losing long term.

Ty Morrison OF

The 6'2 170lb 18 year old outfielder who was drafted in the 4th round of the 2008 draft out of Tigard High School in Oregon. After signing he only played in 10 games with the Princeton Rays, putting up a slash line of .265/.297/.265. Morrison is more toolsy than anything and profiles out as a centerfielder thanks to his above average speed and decent arm. He'll surely start the 2009 season back at Princeton.

Matt Moore LHP

Moore is a stud in waiting. At age 19 he already throws 92-95 MPH and has a curveball that scouts love. Did I mention he's also left handed? In 2007, he showed a glimpse of his dominance with a 12.89 K/9, but was even better in 2008. He sported a 64% GB rate and did not give up a home run in 54.1 IP. His K/9 only dropped slightly to 12.75, but his BB/9 dropped dramatically from 7.08 to 3.15. The drop in walks and the fact that he did not give up a home run lowered his FIP a full two runs from 3.64 to 1.64. Expect him to be in Bowling Green in 2009.

Chris Nowak 1B/3B

Nowak was primarily a first baseman until 2008, when he played over 110 games at the hot corner. No idea how that transition worked, but his offensive numbers are pretty nice. I liked him last year, and nothing has changed. He's finally going to be in Triple-A, and I don't see any reason why he can't profile as a bench player, assuming his defense is passable at third and average at first.

Ryan Reid RHP

Ryan Reid is a 23-year-old reliever entering his fourth season of professional baseball. He's a high strikeout pitcher, posting a K/9 of over 10.00 in A, A+ and AA from 07-08. Reid started the season out with Vero Beach, appearing in 21 games while putting up video game like numbers: 31.0IP, 0.29ERA, 0.59FIP, 3BB, 45K. That earned him a promotion to AA Montgomery where he didn't fare as well with a 4.66ERA, but that was mostly due to a .340 BABIP. He still struck out 53 batters in 46.1IP, but also lost his

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

control and walked 31. The FIP remained very good at 3.26. Reid will start the season in the AA bullpen, and with improved luck should put up good numbers that could lead to a late season promotion to AAA Durham.

Michael Sheridan 1B

Sheridan is a 6'2 215lb 20-year-old first basemen drafted in the 5th Round of the 2008 draft out of William and Mary. Sheridan doesn't project to have much power, and for a first baseman that's a problem. He hit 15 home runs his last year of college, but that number should go down now that he's using wood bats. He put up a slash line of .321/.354/.436 in 78 at bats with Hudson Valley in 2008. Sheridan has been one of the hardest players to strike out wherever he goes, registering just 27 Ks over his three years of college. He should start the season in Low-A Bowling Green.

Stephen Vogt OF/C

The former collegiate catcher did more in his second season with the Rays organization, although he still spent far more time in the pasture. Vogt did manage to throw 8 of 23 attempted thieves out, but had three passed balls, which as we've seen with Shawn Riggins and John Jaso, can make or break catchers defensive value. A lot of his value rides on whether he'll be able to stick behind the plate or change positions permanently, so let's hope it's a correctable footwork thing, because the arm is seemingly good.

The following are international signees/prospects

Mayobanex Acosta

The highest ranked international hitting prospect since the new regime took over. Acosta saw his passed balls totals drop by two in one more game in 2008 and threw out 23 of 48 runners.

Omar Bencomo

20-year-old right-handed pitcher with a 86:9 career K/BB ratio.

Jacinto Cipriota

A second baseman, Cipriota had a .801 OPS in limited time.

Julio Cedenno

He's 19 and has shown a ton of power potential, hitting mostly doubles over the past two seasons.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Hector Guevara

Another new signee, Guevara is a bit of a clumsy shortstop, but he only turned 17 in October. There's some power potential here.

Cesar Guillen

19-year-old 1B/OF type who showed impressive slugging rates in 200 at-bats last season.

Isaias Velasquez

The 20-year old second baseman acquired for Juan Salas.

Nelson Liriano

A relative newcomer to the organization, Liriano is 21-years-old with solid breaking pitches.

Deivis Mavares

A 22-year-old righty reliever who struck out 62 in 48 innings.

Omar Narvaez

A new signee, Narvaez is a catcher.

Gerardo Olivares

Another 19-year-old, Olivares caught most of last season, and had decent offensive numbers. Threw out 24 of 54 attempted stealers, but also had 15 passed balls.

Eddy Romero

An 18-year-old lefty who recorded 20 strikeouts in 16 innings.

Albert Suarez

The highest ranked international prospect since the new regime took over, Suarez looked good in Princeton as an 18-year-old.

Alejandro Torres

A catcher/first baseman type, Torres has shown some power and plate discipline in the VSL. He's now 20.

Rays Fantasy Preview by Jason Collette

Finally, I can write to a biased audience – people that can relate to my plight. Do you have any idea how hard it is going to be to participate in an AL Draft or auction as a Rays fan? Going into last year, outside of Crawford, Kazmir, and Upton, nobody ever went at full value. You could routinely grab Shields in the teens in a draft or pay \$10 for him in an auction, and I even took Percival as a closer in every draft I did with my last pick or at \$1 last year to chuckles. Those days are over now, thanks to our (yea, this is a Rays guide so I'm getting personal) success last season.

I do not think it is a coincidence the powers to be for the [Tout Wars](#) group switched me to the AL draft this year after two years in the NL draft. I think they all want to watch me squirm as every Rays player comes up and make me bid with my heart rather than my head. My advice to you as you enter drafts this year is pay attention to the end of my last sentence – head not heart. When you put together your cheat sheet, put that phrase in large bold letters at the top or get it tattooed into your forearm if you must. One of the worst mistakes you can make when playing fantasy baseball is to let your homerism get in the way of skills.



You may love watching Aki play second base, but as a fantasy player, he is not that special. You may hate watching Wheeler give up the long fly in the 8th inning but he was a terrific middle reliever for AL only players last year.

With that said, let's take a look at the fantasy potential for the Rays roster this year. The information in parenthesis after each player's name is the player's value in a 12 team AL Only League, a 12 team mixed league (courtesy of Fanball) and the player's Average Draft Position (up to 250) according to Couchmanagers.com.

Catchers:

Dioner Navarro (\$7, \$0, 192) – Navi is the safe play at catcher. His batting average last year was fueled by his out of character BABIP and LD% in the second half last year, but his skills will still guarantee a solid average for a catcher. If you look for a .275ish average with 10 homers, you won't be disappointed.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Shawn Riggans (\$1, \$0, N/A) – You take him hoping he eventually hits a long ball with all those first pitches he likes to swing at – at least that is what Magrane would tell us last year.

Infield:

Carlos Pena (\$21, \$15, 79) – Pena is your prototypical first baseman – above average power, run producer, but batting average drainer. He strikes out too much to hit for a good average so look for 35 homers, 100+ RBI, but a .260ish batting average.

Akinori Iwamura (\$12, \$1, 202) – He has value in AL only leagues due to the scarcity positional issues in the American League. There is a fantasy metric called SBO (stolen base opportunities) and Aki has one of the highest in the league. However, we all know how often he gets caught when he does run which is why Maddon doesn't let him run that much.

Jason Bartlett (\$12, \$0, 216) – MVP, MVP, MVP (someone tell Topkin to shut up back there). He helps in three of the five fantasy categories when his game is right but that knee injury last year cost him. If he is not running, his value goes in the tank.

Evan Longoria (\$29, \$24, 18) – This is your fantasy of the Rays club right now. Strikeouts in August and September and struggles vs. LHP held him back last year but both are correctable problems. Some pundits are calling it a mistake to draft him in the 2nd round but I am not in that group. I consider 32 HRs, 100 RBI, and a .285 a conservative projection for 2009.



Willy Aybar (\$2, \$0, N/A) – This is the guy I'm chasing in drafts this year. Multi-positional types are gold in AL only drafts and Aybar's skill set is underrated by drafters so far this year. He just needs the opportunity to produce; draft now, wait for opportunity to arise.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Ben Zobrist (\$0, \$0, N/A) – Sweet Jesus! The homers were wonderful last year but they came after his HR/FB ratio improved 400%. That screams fluke and take away the power and you have a one category middle infielder. He will need more playing time this year to repeat his homer total. That's where his value is because he does not run and his batting is not strong.

Outfield:

Carl Crawford (\$31, \$28, 32) – Crawford was fantasy gold from 2004-2007 earning \$30 or more each year. Last year, the leg and finger problems stopped that run. Now, he's 27 and playing to have the club pick up his high priced option. I cannot believe he is falling into the 3rd round of drafts. Track record is strong despite his habit of first pitch swinging.

B.J. Upton (\$31, \$28, 31) – The shoulder is fixed and we already know he will miss the first week. I do think he'll start slow but we've all seen him go on crazy runs that can let him catch up rather quickly. It will be a push to get to 20 homers this year given the track record of guys coming off shoulder surgeries, but the legs are still there and another 40 steal season is definitely possible and his average will be back near .300.

Gabe Gross (\$0, \$0, N/A) – None of know how the right field situation will play out this year outside of Joe Maddon. Gross is good for the occasional long ball but no speed and poor average keep him as reserve material. He is on the right side of a platoon but with Joyce on the roster with a better skill set, playing time will be tough.



Matt Joyce (\$8, \$0, N/A) – A younger version of Gabe Gross with youth and upside. Legitimate power, legitimate strikeouts problems, and legitimate struggles against left-handed pitching. Even if he gets all the at-bats against righties, he should not see more than 400 at bats. His upside is the left-handed version of Marcus Thames at the plate.

Fernando Perez (\$2, \$0, N/A) – The dreaded fantasy specialist. If you need an end-game pick while speculating steals, Perez is your man. He makes a good RH bat in the platoon as his career OPS in the minors was 63 points higher from that side of the plate. He could be this year's version of Rajai Davis for the Rays and earn \$12 on his legs alone.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Gabe Kapler (\$1, \$0, N/A) – If Perez is not platooning in RF, it will be Kapler. He owns lefties like the Tar Heels own the Clemson Tigers in basketball. The less at bats he sees against righties, the better his average will be. A great 5th outfield pick in AL only leagues but unrosterable anywhere else.

Designated Hitter:

Pat Burrell (\$15, \$6, 128) - Remember when we all liked what Jonny Gomes was doing at the plate a few years back? Expect that from Burrell this year and you will not be disappointed. A better pick in leagues that use OBP but only a three category producer in standards leagues that can really hurt your batting average.

Pitchers:

James Shields (\$24, \$17, 84) - An underappreciated pitcher in years past, but you'll pay full value now. Great ERA, WHIP, wins, and solid strikeouts make him a dream in AL only leagues and a solid investment in a mixed league. Homeruns are the only thing that keeps him away from elite status.

Scott Kazmir (\$19, \$13, 65) - The guy lives off stranding runners like no other pitcher. The fact that he throws so many pitches hurts his wins potential because he has to hand the ball off to the bullpen earlier than most. Strikeouts are always there but it is the only category he excels in. Despite all his troubles with pitch counts, elbow discomfort, and disappearing slider these last few years, he has not had an ERA worse than 3.77 since 2004. The fact that Kazmir is going 20 spots ahead of Shields in mock drafts is mind-boggling.

Matt Garza (\$13, \$7, 128) – Classic case of better real pitcher than fantasy pitcher. We've all seen Garza dominate a game but he does not dominate in any fantasy category. It's weird when a pitcher's WHIP is his best skill when he throws as hard as Garza does and the fact his BABIP lived in the .350's in Minnesota but was 70 points lower here last year gives me pause. Draft for wins and strikeouts and see what happens with ERA and WHIP this year. I expect both to rise from 2008.

Andy Sonnanstine (\$17, \$10, 220) – Great growth year in 2008 but he cannot afford to live with a strikeout rate below 6.0 for too long. Every starting pitcher on the Rays staff dropped nearly a full strikeout per nine as Hickey preached location and who can argue with the results? However, Sonnanstine does not have the pure stuff the rest of the staff so he needs to reduce his balls in play to go to the next level. The long ball hurts his ERA, but his control keeps his WHIP in check. Wins and WHIP are where he helps now but has the potential to help in ERA if he can reduce his FB%

David Price (\$9, \$2, 115) – The mock drafters love this guy right now since he is being picked in front of Garza. Let's be honest – he's a stud but there is room for growth. He

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

needs to work on his changeup and he has only pitched 90 inning above A+ ball in his career. Wins and strikeouts are there now, ERA and WHIP once he gets the third pitch solidified. Possibly the most over-drafted player in mocks right now outside of Matt Wieters.

Jeff Niemann (\$0, \$0, N/A) – Nobody believes the Rays will give Niemann the job out of camp but the fact he's out of options keeps him in the fold. Strikeouts is the only area where he can help right now. I personally think he becomes a better investment working in late relief than as a starter.

Jason Hammel (\$0, \$0, N/A) – Pretty curveballs are not a fantasy category. It is his only redeeming quality so he has no fantasy worthiness.

Troy Percival (\$4, \$0, N/A) – I think we all are appreciative of what Percy gave us the first half of last year, but like Al Reyes in 2007, the magic has run out. He survived 2008 with tremendous BABIP help and serves up more flyballs than any human should. We all know if it were not for the 2009 contract, Percival would have been released by now.

Dan Wheeler (\$8, \$1, N/A) – Terrific middle reliever in fantasy world for the past few years but the [flyball trend](#) has killed any thoughts of making him a closer. Still, that didn't stop Maddon from using Percival as a closer so Wheeler could get the role. His other skills make him an excellent speculation as a fantasy closer – but one who will blow some saves with late long balls.

J.P. Howell (\$4, \$0, N/A) – Howell is another pitcher more valuable to the Rays than fantasy rosters. He can help with vulture wins in relief and his ERA, WHIP, and Ks are strong for a middle reliever.

Grant Balfour (\$6, \$0, 223) – Balfour seems to be the mocker's pick to close this year. One of the luckiest statistical pitchers last year so expect a regression in 2009. He gave up three homers all year despite a 52% FB rate and his 88% LOB rate and .233 BABIP are extremely tough to repeat. He is my pick for closing in 2009 because of the high dominance and low HR rate (even a regressed rate will be better than Wheeler's) but I'm not the manager. Health risk is a concern given his history.

Joe Nelson (\$2, \$0, N/A) – Nelson is another health risk with more surgeries than Joan Rivers. Insane LOB% fueled his numbers last year but he is still a good source for Ks and vulture wins.

Brian Shouse (\$0, \$0, N/A) – You spit LOOGY's at fantasy drafts, not take them.

For in-season fantasy advice, please visit the Fanball.com family at Ownersedge.com (premium) or Rototimes.com (free).

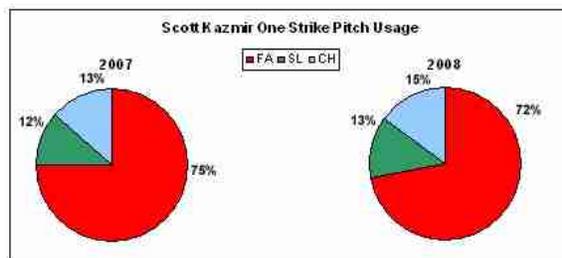
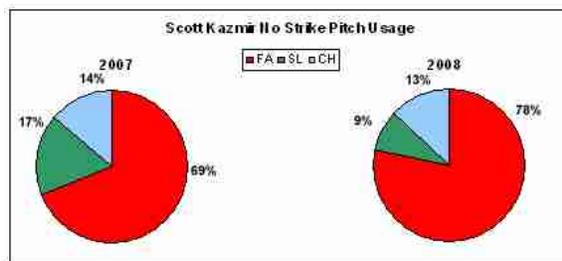
Fastball Craving and Bendy Thing Waving

by R.J. Anderson

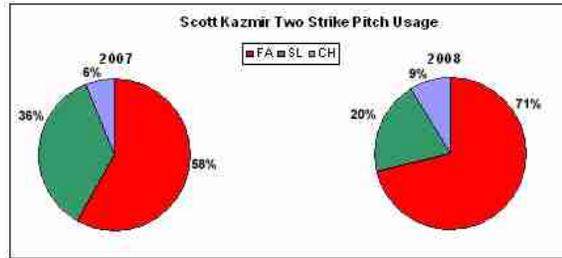
Before I begin this chapter, I'd be remiss not to thank Harry Pavlidis and Graham Goldbeck for their help on this chapter. Not only did Harry supply me with his Scott Kazmir pitch database, but he also helped to create the slice and path graphs reference prominently. Harry and Graham are easily two of the most innovative baseball analysts out there, and I cannot thank him enough for helping me out on short notice.

There's a time unlike any other during the Rays season that happens only 30-to-35 times a year. Every five or so days there's a different feel about the pitcher for the Rays. We call it Kazmir time. For a select group of overly obsessed fans this time is a mix between business time and sexy time, resulting in euphoria and sometimes disappointment. Last year was more of the latter.

A decrease in slider usage has loosely been tied to an unspecified injury in Kazmir's left elbow. The organization isn't going to talk about it, leaving us little to do other than simply speculate and make educated assumptions. What we know is that Kazmir has never been shy about using his slider when healthy, last year he didn't use his slider, therefore... Okay, that's probably not the clearest of logic, but take a look for yourself, does this look like something Kazmir would suddenly result to?



DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



Either Kazmir loves the color red and somehow knew I would use that for his fastball, or there was a philosophical altering. No other pitcher seemed to see an increase in fastballs outside of Dan Wheeler, so perhaps the Rays wanted to limit the amount of sliders thrown by their starters due to some related biomechanical health breakthrough, but that seems pretty outlandish. All pitchers are built uniquely, like snowflakes, and they all melt in their own special and sometimes catastrophic ways. That raises a few questions.

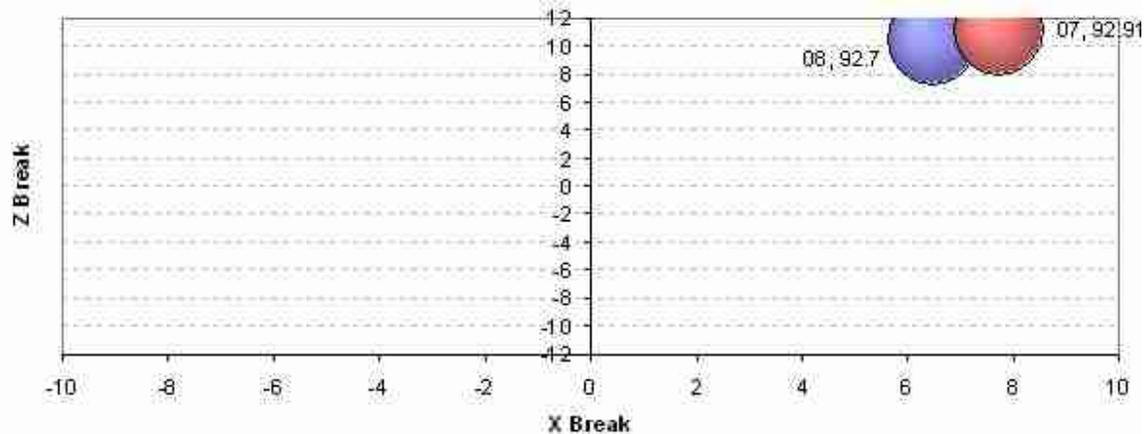
1. If Kazmir were injured, why allow him to pitch?
2. If Kazmir were injured, why re-sign him to a new contract when his value could potentially lessen thanks to injury related performance woes?
3. WHY ALLOW HIM TO PITCH?

The one possibility seems to be that the injury was something static no matter the added stress Kazmir placed upon it. Basically, no further damage could be done.

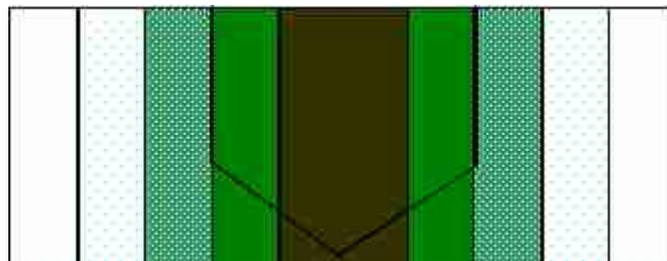
Okay, now, let me remove my fake biomechanics hat and put on my PitchF/x and baseball analyst hat. First, I'd like to focus on Kazmir's approach once he got to a pair of strikes on the batter, leaving him one pitch away from victory. After reaching two strikes in the count in 2008 Kazmir allowed a .499 OPS, that's a 0.030 points increase over 2007 and while it's still a decent total relative to league average, the leaguer average actually dropped by seven OPS points from 2007 to 2008. That suggests on a league wide basis hitters were worse against pitches when they fell behind two strikes then in the previous season, except against Scott Kazmir.

With two strikes Kazmir went to his fastball ~70% of the time. Kazmir's pitches resulted in a ton of fouls, which should lead to a theory that Kazmir's fastball wasn't as effective because it was flatter and slower. Not by much:

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



For the most part Kazmir's velocity and movement remained the same, although there seems to be more white dots near the top than red dots. So if it's not movement or velocity, how about placement? Below I will list the two-strike scenarios and the placement of the pitches thrown, but first allow me to introduce the method. Using PitchF/x and a brain far superior to my own, Harry Pavlidis has developed a method in which he can break down each pitch's placement in comparison to home plate. Below you will see "the key" which stacks up well with the actual charts.



The outside slices are "out wide" and "in wide", the ones in from those are "out/in off", in from that are "out/in edge", "out/in side" and finally the darkest green is "the fat". Otherwise known as the place you generally like to avoid. So does Kazmir?

In a word, no. I'm not going to list the splice charts here in the interest of time and the idea of you actually caring, but most of the charts look alike with most of Kazmir's pitches crossing the plate at the "fat". We know Kazmir likes to throw high fastballs, and we know Kazmir was amongst the worst in the league at foul balls allowed. Hm...it's almost like hitters expected the fastball.

In order to win the game theory battle, Kazmir needs off-speed pitches. Thankfully he has, or perhaps *had*, a plus slider and developed a decent enough change-up to use on right-handed batters. Interestingly Kazmir's change is the one pitch in which was commonly off the fat, and more to the corner of the plate. That's probably not a coincidence, Kazmir simply has better control, or maybe a better idea, of where his change-up is going.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Throwing a pitch down the fat is not always a free ticket to parts unknown for the baseball. Generally though, hitters stand a far better chance of hitting the ball when they know what's coming. Kazmir's fastball is a quality pitch, however it's not enough for him to use in such high dosages. Even worse, the placement doesn't seem to change when Kazmir does throw his other pitches in two strike counts, or when he simply throws his fastball in other counts:

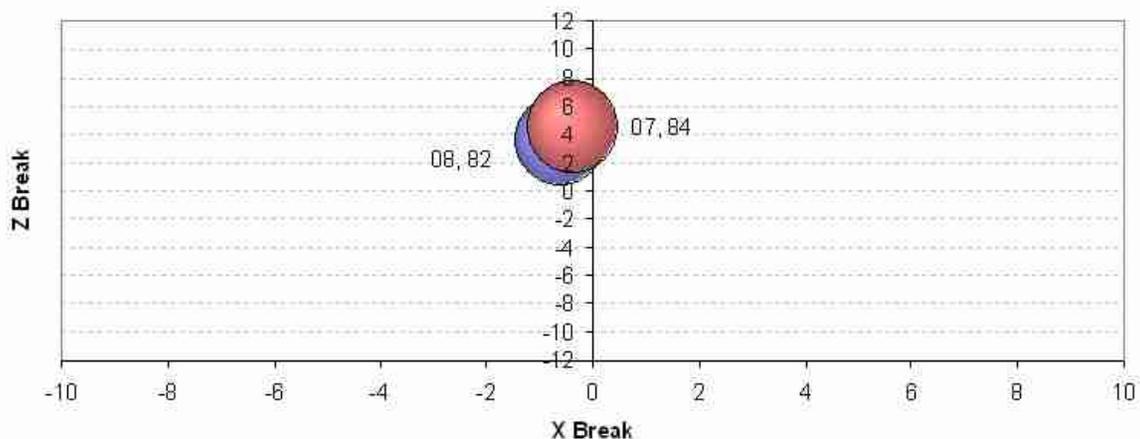
There could be a very good reason as to why Kazmir neglected his slider: the injury dampening the effectiveness. Here's a look at the break and velocity of an average Kazmir slider in 2007 and 2008.

Movement in x: 2007 -0.62 inches, 2008 -0.39 inches.

Movement in Z: 2007 3.68 inches, 2008 4.57 inches.

Velocity: 2007 84 MPH, 2008 83 MPH.

Here's a visual look at what that means:



Kazmir needs his slider. His fastball command isn't getting it done. Perhaps it's the gameplan, I don't really know, but what I do know is that his slider changed for whatever reason. The pitch broke in to righties less and "broke down" less when compared to a ball thrown without spin. Kazmir's slider release point was higher in 2008 by roughly a fourth of an inch – you can sort of see that in the image below -- and slightly lower than his fastball release. Perhaps he changed grips – Rays television viewers are familiar with Joe Magrane beating the "odd grip" point to death with Kazmir's slider – attempting to prevent injury, perhaps it was to comfort the injury. We don't know and there's a chance we'll never know.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



So there you have it. When he did throw the slider, it wasn't too much different than before, even with a few changes in delivery. He simply didn't throw it as much. That almost has to be something to do with comfort level, and unfortunately we have no way to measure whether Kazmir's comfort throwing his trademark pitch will return or not.

I've come to terms that Kazmir is likely to miss a handful of starts during any given season. I'm fine with that. Kazmir is a lot like Carl Crawford, he's the most talented pitcher on staff, yet has little nuisances that sometimes cause us to take their actual talent level for granted. Crawford's plate discipline and Kazmir's pitch efficiency are utter parallels. Every great player – minus Albert Pujols – has a downfall. It's easy to fall into thinking the flaw somehow outweighs the rest of the talent, but that's ridiculous thinking.

Kazmir is one of the best pitchers in baseball. Let's not allow one wayward data point change our line of thinking.

Crawford & Clemente by Tommy Rancel

For years now there have been talks of Carl Crawford “breaking out”. For the past few seasons it seems that each one has been “the year Carl Crawford will become a superstar.” For most 27 year olds with more hits than Rickey Henderson and Tim Lincecum at the same age that would signify superstardom, but Carl has yet to have *that* breakout season. Many again thought that 2008 would be that season. Fresh off back to back .820+ OPS seasons, Crawford was expected to make that next leap. He was supposed to take that leap from an .800 OPS hitter and push that towards .900. He was supposed to add more power and become a prototypical #3 hitter. Well as we all know that didn't happen due to a variety of things.



First, we have the injuries. Crawford complained about sore knees and cranky hamstrings. This contributed to his slow start and saw him hit just .270/.315/.385 in the first half of the season. When things started to heat up for him, he tore a tendon in his right hand that ended his regular season as a hitter on 8/9/08. He would return to play defense at the end of September and then back to the lineup in time for the Rays playoff run, but 2008 would be classified as a disappointment. Besides injuries, Crawford experienced a bit of bad luck. As Erik Hahmann mentioned earlier in the guide, while Crawford's LD%, GB% and FB% remained within reach of career levels, his BABIP dropped to .301. This was a 78-point drop from 2007 and a 29-point drop off his career average. Therefore, while 2007 proved very lucky for him, 2008 was justifiably unlucky.

So what does this mean? Did Crawford peak in 2006 and 2007? On the other hand, were we just off on our projections by a year or two? Crawford played most of 2008 as a 26 year old. He turned 27 on August 5th, and as I mentioned earlier, was done for the season less than a week later. I decided to see what some other Major Leaguers with similar numbers to Crawford did before and after age 26. I was shocked when I saw the name that popped up as the most comparable to Crawford at age 26. The name is Roberto Clemente.

As a Puerto Rican, this name is near and dear to my heart. As a kid, I was taught all about the legend that was Roberto Clemente both on and off the field. Of course being in my early 20s, I missed seeing Clemente play. So the fact that I've been watching Crawford since 2002 and have statistically compared him to a legend that I have on a pedestal is a pretty big and welcomed surprise. Here are the numbers for both at the same age

Age 26	BA	OBP	SLG	HR	2B	3B	ISO	SB
Crawford	0.293	0.330	0.435	70	157	84	0.141	302
Clemente	0.298	0.331	0.431	65	162	65	0.131	26

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

The slash lines are almost identical. Clemente has a five-point advantage in BA, but Crawford nearly makes that up with a four-point advantage in slugging. Neither were OBP machines at the same age, but .330 is about average. Crawford has the advantage in home runs and a big lead in Triples, while



Clemente narrowly edges him out in doubles. As far as stolen bases, Crawford dwarfs Clemente in steals by an almost 12:1 ratio. Defensively, Clemente is regarded as one of the best to ever play the game. He won 12 gold gloves and his arm would probably rate an 85 on the 20-80 scale. Crawford is no slouch himself defensively. Of course, the way Gold Gloves are judged has changed, but you can argue over the last five years or so Crawford has been, and still is, the best left fielder in the game, but has no gold gloves to his credit. As for the arm? If Crawford has twelve times the amount of steals as Clemente at the same age, then I'll say Clemente had twelve times the arm.

Getting back to the chart above, the columns I want to highlight the most here are ISO/SLG. Since the consensus is that all Crawford is really missing from his game is power, I wanted to see when that jump came for Clemente. Up to this point, Crawford had the better power numbers. His slugging was a bit higher and there is a bigger discrepancy in ISO. Crawford has had four seasons of .450+ slugging with a peak of .482 in 2006. At this point in his Hall of Fame career Clemente had just started to show some power. He had four seasons of a sub .410 slugging before exploding to .559 in 1961.

Now let's take a look at Clemente's SLG and ISO going forward. From Age 27 on Clemente's slugging percentage and ISO look like this:

As you can see the great leap of power happened for Clemente from that age on. His average SLG% from age 27-37 was .502 and his average ISO over the same time period was .173. In fact his .454 SLG% as a 27 year old would be the lowest mark for the rest of his career. As far as I can see with the limited data, there isn't really an

Age	SLG	ISO
27	0.454	0.141
28	0.47	0.15
29	0.484	0.145
30	0.463	0.134
31	0.536	0.219
32	0.554	0.197
33	0.482	0.191
34	0.544	0.199
35	0.556	0.204
36	0.502	0.161
37	0.479	0.167

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

explanation for it. Clemente finished his career with a BB% of 6.2 and a K% of 13.00. Up to the age of 26 those percentages were 5.0 and 10.86. There really isn't that big of a difference to explain why he went from slugging like Randy Winn to Carlos Pena.

Does this mean that all of a sudden because there was an extra candle on Carl Crawford's birthday that he will magically start hitting more home runs or slugging .500%? No. And to be honest it may never come, but for those of us who think it will and have been patiently waiting, it does say "hey, at age 26 he is almost statistically equal to one of the best players ever and that player happened to have a huge power surge from age 27-37." We were poised for that breakout last year and Crawford disappointed us a little 2008, but maybe we really just got a year ahead of ourselves. Either way we are watching something special.

The All-Time Rays Offensive and Defensive Teams by Tommy Rancel

Every year somebody tries to make an All Time Devil Rays/Rays team. Usually after Fred McGriff, Carl Crawford and Aubrey Huff, you start to run out of players, at least players who play different positions. What I wanted to do is put together the all time Rays team by the best season at each position. So here its...your All Time Tampa Bay Devil Rays/Rays offensive team.



C Dioner Navarro (2008)

1B Carlos Pena (2007)

As of right now this is the gold standard for Rays position players. Cut on the last day of spring training, only to be resigned a day later (Thank you Greg Norton's legs), Pena would have the best season of his career and of any player in Rays history. Pena set team single season records in HR(49), RBI(121), BB(103), OBP(.411), SLG(.627) of course OPS(1.037). His 10.7 HR per AB was even better than Jose Canseco who hit 34 HR in 430 AB in 1999. It wasn't just offense that made Pena's season great. Defensively, he ranked 2nd behind Daric Barton in UZR for AL First basemen.

2B Aki Iwamura (2008)

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

3B Evan Longoria (2008)

SS Julio Lugo (2005)

As we end our run on 2008 players, we get a blast from the past in Julio Lugo. Jason Bartlett may have been named the Rays MVP in 2008, but his season at SS comes nowhere close to Lugo's 2005 season. Lugo would set career high's in BA(.295), OBP(.362), OPS(.765), wOBA(.345). He also would swipe a career best 39 bases, which remains the Rays record for a SS. Lugo's success at the plate was due to an improved batting eye that saw him K a career low 11% of the time. His K/BB rate was also the best of his career. On defense, his UZR of 5.2 ranked third in the American League among shortstops.

LF Carl Crawford (2005)

Carl Crawford is the best player to ever wear a Rays uniform. At age 27 he already is the franchise leader in many categories. He's a 2 time all star and is the face of the franchise. CC's had many good seasons, but 2005 is his most complete season. Offensively, his 2006 and 2007 seasons rank higher than 2005, but statistically his defense was lower in those years. His best defensive season was 2004, but his offense lower than 2005. So what did CC do in 2005? His slash line was .30/.331/.469. He hit a career best 63 extra base hits and swiped 46 bags. As a defender, his UZR of 17.8 was third best in the entire major league among qualified outfielders. As far as value, he has never been worth more than the 5.1 wins he was in 2005.

CF Randy Winn (2002)

Had it not been for a torn labrum in 2008, this would've been B.J. Upton. However, it's not and the honor of best season by a Rays center fielder goes to Randy Winn. Winn was easily the Rays best player in 2008 according to WAR. His 4.6 WAR was more than double the next closest Ray (Aubrey Huff 2.2). Winn boasted a slash line of .298/.360/.461 with a wOBA of .360. He hit 39 doubles and stole 27 bases. Defensively, he wasn't great, but was 9th among major league center fielders in UZR. The Rays would trade Winn in the off-season to Seattle for the managerial services of Lou Piniella. I'd ranked this as the second worst trade in team history behind Stocker for Abreu.

RF Aubrey Huff (2003)

Up until 2006, Aubrey Huff was the best player in franchise history. He is still second on the Rays all time list in Games, AB, Runs, Hits, Total Bases, Walks amongst other things behind Carl Crawford. He is also currently the franchise's all time leader in doubles, home runs and RBI. While his personal best season as a Rays player was 2004, it was as a third basemen and it was not as good as Longoria's 2008. However, he does check in with his 2003 performance as a right fielder. For the Rays, right fielder has been and remains a revolving door. Even in 2008 we are looking at a platoon with hopes of Matt Joyce becoming the permanent solution down the road. For Huff his 2003 slash line was

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

pretty much par for the course. He hit .311/.367/.555. His .922 OPS is still his career high and his wOBA of .382 was just shy of his 2008 .387. He had 198 hits and 353 total bases which are both still Rays single season marks. His 84 extra base hits including 47 doubles are also both franchise records. However, there is a reason Huff was switched back to third base after the season. His UZR of -6.1 was last in the AL among right fielders with at least 800 innings.

DH Jose Canseco (1999)

Say what you want about Canseco, but in 1999 he was well on his way to putting up the most productive season in Rays history before being hit by the injury bug. His .279/.369/.563 is the easily the best slash line put up by a Rays hitter. His 34 home runs and .563 SLG% rank second all time to Carlos Pena's 2007 season. In true DH fashion, Canseco logged 0.0 innings in the field and we are grateful for that.

And now for the defense.



C: Dioner Navarro (2008)

1B: Travis Lee (2003)

If Pat is the Bat, then Lee is the glove. In first go round with the Rays, Lee posted a UZR of 11.5 which is still the best mark for a Rays 1B and helped him to a 3.1 WAR in 03.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

2B: Rey Sanchez (2004)

The Rays have had some terrible offensive second basemen in team history, however, historically 2B has been a strength defensively. Aki Iwamura, Brent Abernathy, Marlon Anderson and Rey Sanchez were all above average fielders. Sanchez, however, was the best in 2004 when he led the entire major leagues in UZR for a 2B with 16.8(min 650 innings)

3B: Evan Longoria (2008)

SS: Julio Lugo (2004)

Again, while Jason Bartlett was named team MVP in 2008, he does not measure up to Julio Lugo. For all the praise Barlett received, his 1.5 UZR in 2008 was dwarfed by the 14.5 put up by Lugo in 2004. In fact, Bartlett's best defensive season is still not as good as Lugo's 2004.

LF: Carl Crawford (2008)

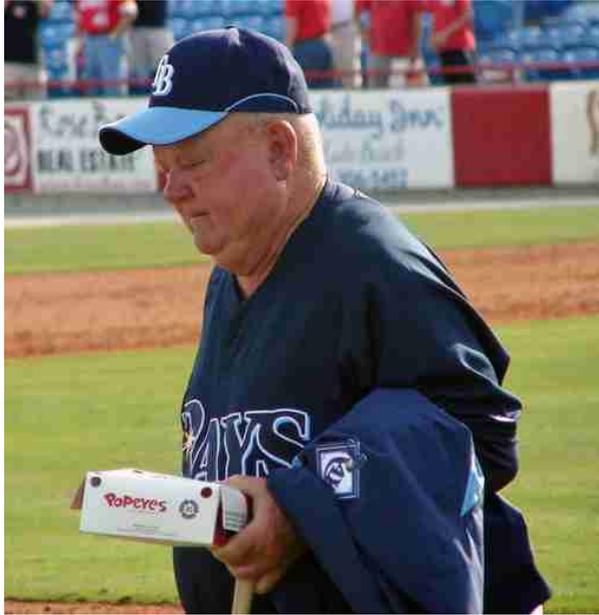
CF: Joey Gathright (2006)

Gathright is fast and fast means you can cover a lot of ground. That is why it's no surprise to see him with the highest UZR in team history out in centerfield. Just to show how much gold gloves have become a joke, Gathright's UZR was 20.10 higher than Torii Hunter who won a gold glove in 2006.

RF: Gabe Gross (2008)

DH: Jorge Cantu (2005)

The Human Lawn Statue makes this list in pure jest. As a poster boy for the designated hitter, Cantu posted a UZR of -127 at 3B in 2005. His UZR/150 was a whopping -33.5. The Mongolian beef must only affect the hitting part of his game.



The Best of Short Tidbits by R.J. Anderson

Which is to say, sometimes things just aren't developed into full length features.

Gabe Gross Was Not Clutch

Using Tom Tango's Win Probability Added and Leverage Index we can make such statements. Gross' average leverage index was 0.99, essentially what you would expect from a starting pitcher. His WPA/LI was 0.44, his WPA – which is completely based on a context situation rather than an average – was only 0.18. That means, simply, that Gross was not better in higher leverage situations, or otherwise his WPA would've reflected it. For those wondering, team "MVP" Jason Bartlett had a WPA of -1.38, and a WPA/LI of -1.12. The most "clutch"? Carl Crawford, followed closely by Akinori Iwamura and Carlos Pena. The least: Cliff Floyd, Evan Longoria, and Gross.

Well Hey, At Least Edwin Was Good At Something

As for pitchers, Edwin was the most clutch – albeit while having a negative WPA and WPA/LI – followed by J.P. Howell, Jason Hammel, Scott Dohmann, and Scott Kazmir. The least clutch pitchers were Matt Garza, Andy Sonnanstine, James Shields, Al Reyes, David Price, and Dan Wheeler. This can be explained pretty easily. Being clutch as a pitcher requires either entering in situations with high pressure or putting yourself into those situations of high danger. Guess which Edwin did and did well?

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Pull The Lever

The only Rays pitcher to appear in a game without being “pulled” (a.k.a. being removed before finishing the game) was Jae Kuk Ryu. J.P. Howell (55/64), Trever Miller (52/68), Dan Wheeler (44/70), Grant Balfour (39/51), and Al Reyes (20/26) were the most pulled. Meanwhile Troy Percival (12/50) was the last of those with more than 10 appearances. Go figure.

Don't Call it a Comparison

Since 1998, the Rays and Arizona Cardinals have had more losing seasons than winning seasons. After that, the comparisons are off. The Cardinals have won 58 games since then, a .363 winning percentage, the Rays have won 645, a .398 winning percentage. Using binomial distribution, the chances of the Cardinals winning 9 games based on their previous decade of performance was 3%. As for the chances of the Rays winning a proportionally equal 91 games? Zero.

It's Amazing

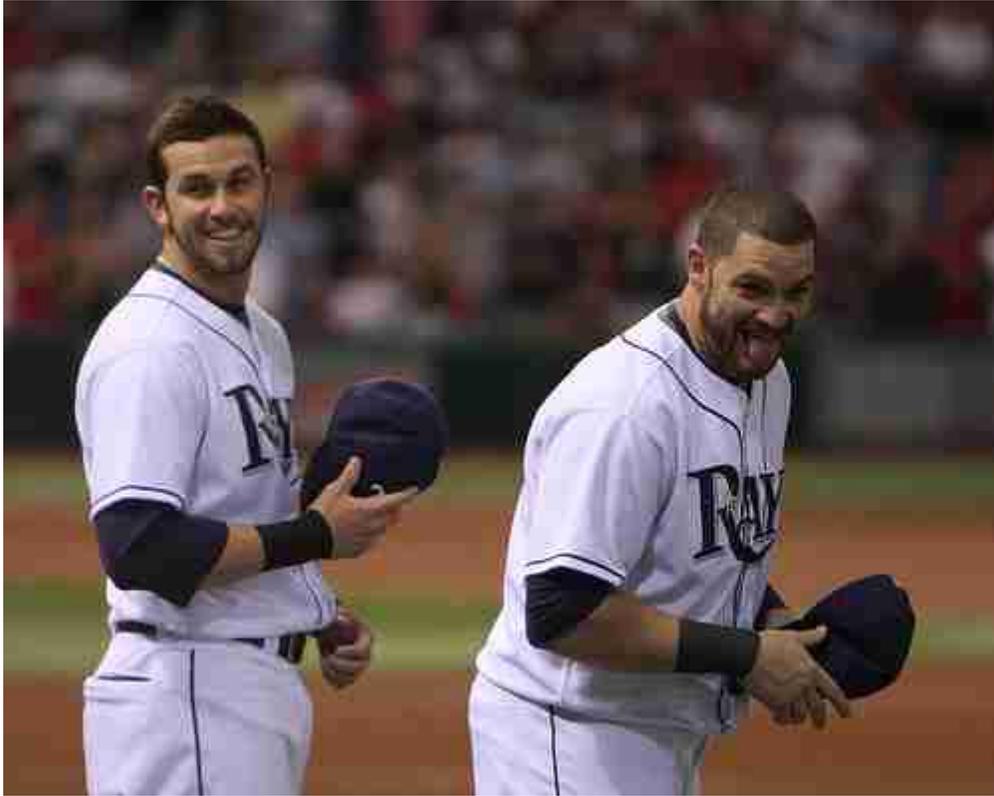
One of the perks of MLB having its own network is the amount of classic games shown. I wasn't alive in 1969, nor do I have a particular reason to check random World Series boxscores all too often, so imagine my surprise when I see Game 3 highlights. 22-year-old Gary Gentry was the Mets third starter. In his first “big” game Gentry would last six and two-thirds innings, allow three hits, walk five, and strike four Baltimore Orioles out. It's important to note that Gentry's day ended after three walks in the seventh, so the final line is a bit misleading in terms of spread. Gentry would give way to 22-year-old Nolan Ryan who would go multiple innings, allow one hit, and strike three out, earning a save and putting the Mets up by a game.

Fast forward to game seven of the American League Championship Series. Matt Garza is 24-years-old and throwing in his third career post-season game. He'll go seven, allow two hits, walk three, and strike out nine. Dan Wheeler and J.P. Howell will record an out each before Chad Bradford enters and walks his lone batter. 22-year-old David Price comes in and records the final out of the inning. Price winds up ending the game and striking the most famous pose in Rays history.

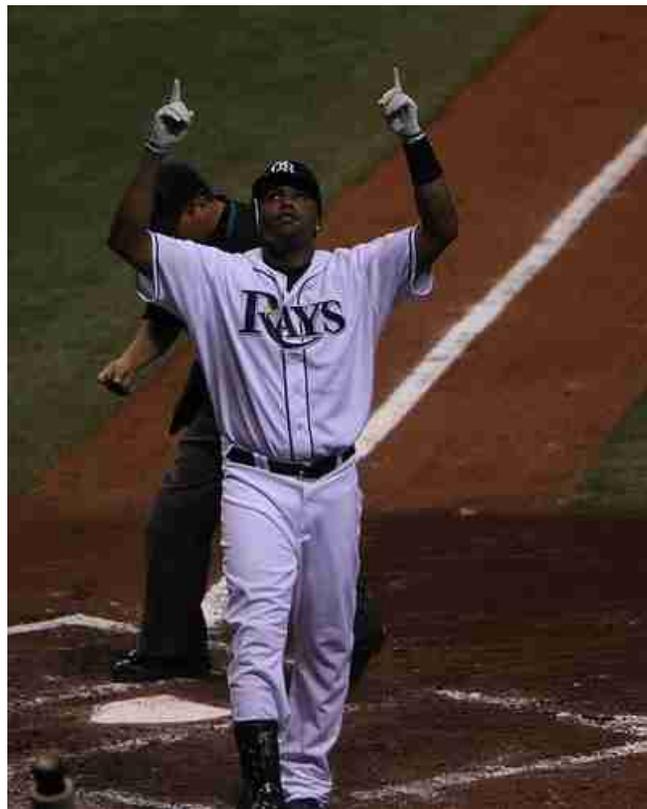
DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



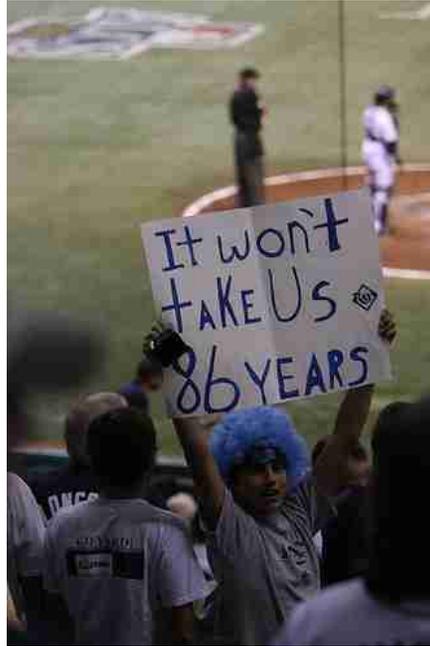
DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



DRaysBay Season Preview 2009



Acknowledgements

More than we can list, but here's a try anyways...

Stuart Sternberg, Andrew Friedman, Matthew Silverman, Gerry Hunsicker, James Click, Chaim Bloom, Erik Neander, and basically the rest of the Rays organization – players, management, coaches, stadium workers, ect. – for providing us with the best season of baseball in team history. Writers like Keith Law, Rob Neyer, Dave Cameron, Jonah Keri, Tom Tango, Peter Bendix, and Sky Kalkman for making us smarter. Marc Normandin, Jason Collette, and Kiley McDaniel for agreeing to take part in this publication. Bob Rittner for being the smartest Rays fan around. Marc Topkin and Marc Lancaster – amongst others – for being some of the best beat writers around. Harry Pavlidis, Graham Goldbeck, Richard Schaefer, Dennis Adair, and countless others who helped to contribute in non-writing or editing affairs in this publication.

Statistical Glossary

Pitching

Win/Losses/Saves

Absolutely have zero value. If Scott Kazmir is on the mound, goes five, gives up five runs, and has his team bomb the opposing starter for seven, he's in line for a win. If James Shields pitches eight, gives up a lone run, and the opposing starter shuts the Rays down, Shields might get charged with a loss. Troy Percival can walk the bases loaded, allow two sac flies, and as long as he kept the lead, get credited with a save. W/L/S do not speak for a players actions, but rather his team actions. Starters on good teams will probably have more wins than starters on poor teams, the same goes for saves.

ERA

The most common pitching stat around. We use ERAs scale (runs allowed per nine innings) for other run average metrics like tRA and FIP, but ERA itself isn't forth telling about pitcher value. Luck, like poor defense or a shoddy non-error call, can inflate ERAs. Plus, pitchers don't control hit rates nearly as much as people think, which is also why WHIP is pretty meaningless. ERA+ is equally uninformative.

Strikeouts

Are good, very, very good. Swinging strikeouts are the best since they imply the pitcher has plus stuff or velocity and are seemingly more sustainable than strikeouts looking - which relies on an off hitter and a potentially favorable strikezone. Strikeouts usually translate well from year to year and minors to majors.

Walks

Are bad, very, very bad. For high strikeout pitchers they're more acceptable, given the ball will be put into play less, but for average to below average strikeout types, they can be killer.

LD/GB/FB

Or line drives, groundballs, and flyballs. If you're ranking them in terms of what you'd prefer: GBs >> FBs >>>> LDs. Liners are the batted ball type most likely to go for a hit. Pitchers who give up a ton of line drives simply don't make it to the majors, or if they do, they have a freaking warehouse of rabbits feet. Flyballs can result in homeruns, the more flyballs, the more homeruns (depending on the park). Yeah, groundballs can go for hits, but how often is a grounder going for extra bases?

FIP

Fielding Independent Pitching. Okay, here's where the whole "isolating the pitcher from

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

the team" process gets started. The pitcher can control three things: walks, strikeouts, and homeruns allowed. Hence, FIP takes each of those into account and puts it on a scale so that league average FIP is equal to league average ERA. FIP+ is the "compared to league average" form.

tRA

Graham's stat is FIP on hGH. The pitchers are charged not only for homeruns, walks, and strikeouts, but also the batted ball type. So pitchers with a ton of line drives allowed are going to have a higher tRA than pitchers with mostly groundballs. tRA* is the regressed form, and tRA+ is the "compared to league average" form.

BABIP

This plays hand and hand with LD/GB/FB. Most pitchers have batting averages on balls in play between .290 and .310. Anything on the other end of the extremes, without something peculiar involved with the LD rate, is probably going to regress back to that range. Are there some outliers? Absolutely. Good/bad defense can affect this number heavily. A better point of reference than "Batting Average Against", but neither tells you much about the pitchers talent. The best method for a quick BABIP estimator is an average over the last three years.

Hitting

Batting Average

Only tells one side of the story. A player can hit .310, but if his OBP and SLG are .320/.400, he's not quite as useful as you would assume.

On-Base Percentage/Average

Tells a slightly larger side of the story. It's usually best to combine OBP with walk rates and or an iso discipline stat (which is to say OBP - BA).

Slugging Percentage

Again, tells one part of the story, the bases per at-bat side.

wOBA

Don't let the name confuse you, this isn't just OBA/OBP under a different name. Instead it's a Tom Tango created metric that uses linear weights (aka: weighs how much each event contributes to a run) assigns a value to, and then spits out in a form that we can easily turn into runs created. FanGraphs version takes into account SB and CS as well.

wRAA

FanGraphs version of wOBA runs created above league average. The "Value" section of a player page includes a park adjusted version of this metric.

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

BABIP

See above.

LD/GB/FB

See above.

RBI

Oh heavens to Betsy I hate RBIs. People will look at a player's runs batted in and assign labels like "run producer" to him. Perfect example: Jose Guillen. Look, the guy hits for some power, but he's not a very good hitter, especially not for a corner outfielder. In 2008 Guillen had 97 RBIs, yet had a wRAA of -5. Yeah, a below average hitter had nearly 100 RBIs.

Homeruns

They're nice, but they aren't the only way to score. Also, a player who hits 30 homeruns and does nothing else is not valuable, but a player who hits 5 homeruns and does other stuff can be.

Stolen Bases

Are nice. Just make sure you're succeeding ~70% of the time.

Defense

Errors

Too opinion based, plus if a player doesn't have the range to get to a ball, how can it be an error?

Fielding Percentage

Consider the above. If Jason Bartlett gets to a ball deep in the hole, then throws the ball away, that's an error. If Derek Jeter takes two steps, then lets the ball shoot through the gap while blowing bubbles, that's not an error. You see the problem here.

UZR

FanGraphs defensive stat of choice. Developed by MGL. Takes the park into equation and adjusts based on such.

TotalZone

A defensive system developed by Rally/Sean Smith.

PMR

A defensive system developed by David Pinto.

[Zone ratings](#)

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Plus/Minus

A defensive system developed by John Dewan and The Fielding Bible group. Provided in PLAYS form, so multiple that by 0.8 (the value of turning a single into an out) and you'll get the runs form. These are formed by a team of experts watching each play and giving a "+" or a "-" based on the play made. If Bartlett makes a play that another shortstop missed, he gets a "+", if Bartlett misses a play another shortstop made, he gets a "-".

Use these together, average them, and you'll have a nice idea of how valuable (or how not valuable) a player is.

Defensive spectrum:

DH | 1B | LF | RF | 3B | CF | 2B | SS | CA

The left side is the easier positions, the right the harder.

Win Values

Positional adjustments:

CA - 22.5 runs.

1B/COF - -7.5 runs

2B/CF/3B - 2.5 runs

SS - 7.5 runs

DH - -22.5 runs, but since batters are usually ~ -5 runs worse as a DH/pinch hitter, we give them a five run bonus, so only penalize the player -17.5 runs.

Replacement adjustments:

This is a fancy way of saying: a replacement level player is ~20-22.5 runs worse than an average player. Think Ray Olmedo.

Replacement player

Average player: replacement player :: superstar player : average player

Batting

Park adjusted wRAA.

Fielding

UZR totals.

Value Runs

The total runs the player contributed.

Value Wins

Value Runs/10 (or the amount of runs for a "win")

Context specific

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

pLI

Leverage, aka how tough or untough a situation is for a pitcher. 1 is the standard for starting pitchers, 1.8-2 for closers, 1.3-1.5 for set-up men, ect, and 0.5 or so for mop-up men.

WPA

Win probability added

Projection systems

PECOTA

The best of any projection system. This is a Baseball Prospectus feature.

ZiPS

Found at [BaseballThinkFactory](http://BaseballThinkFactory.com).

CHONE

Found at baseballprojection.com.

Marcel's

The most basic of all projection systems, yet still does pretty decent considering it's basically the last three years of data, an age modifier, and a ton of regression. All other projection systems should aim to outperform Marcel's or otherwise quit.

Index

- 1**
1st Round, 13
- 2**
2006, 9, 10, 11, 23, 26, 28, 42, 59, 60, 63, 65
2007, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 41,
42, 44, 45, 46, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 62, 63, 64
2nd Round, 13
- A**
Acquired, 13
Adam Kennedy, 3, 35
Akinori Iwamura, 2, 10, 25, 42, 50, 66
Al Reyes, 11, 16, 35, 53, 66, 67
Albert Suarez, 3, 48
Alejandro Torres, 3, 48
Andrew Friedman, 13, 72
Andrew Sonnanstine, 2, 33
Arizona Cardinals, 67
Aubrey Huff, 9, 33, 62, 63
- B**
B.J. Upton, 2, 6, 10, 13, 30, 33, 51, 63
Baltimore Orioles, 23, 67
Ben Zobrist, 2, 10, 26, 34, 51
Boston Red Sox, 15
Bowling Green, 41, 43, 45, 46, 47
Brendan Harris, 11
Brian Meadows, 10
Brian Shouse, 2, 32, 53
Brian Stokes, 11
- C**
Carl Crawford, 2, 6, 8, 10, 13, 23, 31, 51, 58, 59, 61,
62, 63, 65, 66
Carlos Pena, 2, 8, 11, 29, 50, 61, 62, 64, 66
Casey Fossum, 10
Cesar Guillen, 3, 48
Chicago White Sox, 15, 31
CHONE, 13, 20, 25, 77
Chris Nowak, 3, 46
Chuck LaMar, 13, 39
Cliff Floyd, 11, 66
- D**
D.J. Jones, 3, 45
Dale Thayer, 2, 33
- Damon Hollins, 10
Dan Miceli, 11
Dan Wheeler, 2, 11, 16, 34, 53, 55, 66, 67
Deivis Mavares, 3, 48
Delmon Young, 10, 21, 24
Derek Rodriguez, 2, 31
Desmond Jennings, 3, 45
Dewon Day, 2, 31, 35
Dioner Navarro, 2, 10, 28, 49, 62, 64
Doug Waechter, 10
Draft, 13, 33, 49, 52
Durham, 21, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 44, 47
- E**
Edwin Jackson, 6, 10, 16, 26, 31
Elijah Dukes, 10
Elliot Johnson, 2, 26
Enny Romero, 3, 48
Evan Longoria, 2, 6, 28, 29, 41, 50, 63, 65, 66
- F**
Fernando Perez, 2, 27, 30, 51
Florida Marlins, 14
Fred McGriff, 8, 62
- G**
Gabe Gross, 2, 24, 51, 65, 66
Gabe Kapler, 2, 27, 52
Gary Gentry, 67
Gary Glover, 11
Gerardo Olivares, 3, 48
Grant Balfour, 2, 18, 21, 29, 53, 67
- H**
Hector Guevara, 3, 48
Hudson Valley, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47
- I**
Isaias Velasquez, 3, 48
Isais Velasquez, 48
- J**
Jacinto Cipriota, 3, 47
Jacob Jefferies, 3, 44
Jae Kuk Ryu, 11, 67
Jae Seo, 10
Jake McGee, 3, 45
James Houser Jr., 3, 43

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

James Shields, 2, 10, 14, 15, 18, 31, 32, 33, 52, 66, 73
Jason Bartlett, 2, 9, 13, 21, 26, 42, 50, 63, 65, 66, 75
Jason Childers, 2, 10, 35
Jason Corder, 42
Jason Hammel, 2, 24, 31, 53, 66
Jason Isringhausen, 3, 35
Jeff Niemann, 2, 25, 29, 31, 53
Jeremy Hellickson, 3, 41, 43
Jesus Colome, 10
Joe Maddon, 9, 11, 51
Joe Nelson, 2, 28, 53
Joey Gathright, 10, 30, 65
John Jaso, 2, 26, 47
Jonny Gomes, 10, 11, 22, 52
Jorge Cantu, 9, 65
Jose Canseco, 62, 64
Josh Paul, 11
Juan Salas, 11, 48
Julio Cedeno, 3, 47
Julio Lugo, 9, 15, 63, 65
Justin Ruggiano, 2, 32

K

Kyeong Kang, 3, 45
Kyle Ayers, 3, 41

L

Lance Cormier, 2, 22, 23
Los Angeles Angels, 14

M

Mark Hendrickson, 10
Matt Garza, 2, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 24, 41, 52, 66, 67
Matt Gorgen, 3, 43
Matt Joyce, 2, 24, 26, 51, 63
Matt Moore, 3, 41, 46
Mayobanex Acosta, 3, 47
Michael Sheridan, 3, 47
Milwaukee Brewers, 23
Mitch Talbot, 2, 31, 33
Montgomery, 41, 43, 45, 46
Morgan Ensberg, 2, 35
MVP, 21, 24, 50, 63, 65, 66

N

Nelson Liriano, 3, 48
New York Yankees, 18
Nick Barnese, 3, 41
Nick Green, 11
Nolan Ryan, 67

O

Oakland Athletics, 17
Omar Bencomo, 3, 47
Omar Narvaez, 3, 48

P

Pat Burrell, 2, 7, 22, 26, 52
PECOTA, 13, 20, 77
Port Charlotte, 45
post-season experience., 11
Princeton, 41, 46, 48

R

Randy Choate, 2, 22
Randy Winn, 61, 63
Ray Olmedo, 3, 35, 76
Reid Brignac, 3, 42
Reid Fronk, 3, 43
Rey Sanchez, 65
Rhyne Hughes, 3, 44
Roberto Clemente, 8, 59
Rocco Baldelli, 10
Ruddy Lugo, 10, 11
Rule 5, 13, 31, 33
Russell Branyan, 11
Ryan Reid, 3, 41, 46

S

Scott Dohmann, 66
Scott Kazmir, 2, 8, 10, 13, 17, 27, 32, 52, 54, 55, 66, 73
Seattle Mariners, 16
Seth McClung, 10
Shawn Camp, 10, 11
Shawn Riggans, 2, 31, 47, 50
Stephen Vogt, 3, 47

T

Texas Rangers, 15
Tim Beckham, 3, 41
Toby Hall, 9
Toronto Blue Jays, 16
Trade, 13
Travis Harper, 10
Travis Lee, 9, 64
Trevor Miller, 11, 16, 67
Troy Percival, 2, 11, 21, 24, 30, 53, 67, 73
Ty Morrison, 3, 46
Ty Wigginton, 10, 11

V

Vero Beach, 43, 46

W

Wade Davis, 3, 42
Waivers, 13
Willy Aybar, 2, 21, 25, 50
Winston Abreu, 2, 35

DRaysBay Season Preview 2009

Y

Yankee Stadium, 18

